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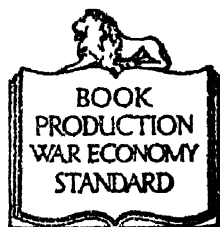


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RED CROSS AND BERLIN EMBASSY
1915-1926



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Viscountess D'Aberton
From a drawing by J. S. Sargent, R.A.

RED CROSS
AND BERLIN EMBASSY
1915—1926

*EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARIES OF
VISCOUNTESS D'ABERNON*



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

TO EDGAR'S UNFADING MEMORY

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*Les longs ouvrages me font peur
Loin d'épuiser une matière on ne doit prendre que la fleur.*

LA FONTAINE.

FOREWORD

THESE fragmentary Notes and Diaries were put together as a brief record of personal experience in somewhat unusual circumstances, and were, for the most part, hastily written at the time the happenings related in them occurred. Any endeavour to correct their lack of literary skill or to string them into a flowing tale would efface the only merit to which they pretend—that of being first-hand, glancing sidelights upon individuals and upon events which perhaps, even to-day, are not altogether without interest.

June 1945.

H. D'ABERNON.

The Explanatory Notes at the heads of Chapters are contributed by Patrick Campbell (late of New College, Oxford).

EXPLANATORY NOTE

THE record of the Entente for 1915 had been disappointing, and at the beginning of 1916 the Central Powers appeared to be in a dangerously strong position. In the South and East neither Italy nor Russia were making headway, and the Western Front was rapidly becoming the most important theatre of war.

For the campaign of 1916 both sides had planned an offensive on a large scale. The German Staff decided to try and pierce the French line at Verdun, and began their attacks at this point in February. Though in a salient, Verdun itself was a few miles behind the front line, and its defences had been seriously neglected so that by the end of the month the Germans had advanced almost halfway to it. Attacks continued after this for several months, but the French resistance was stubborn and their line held, though forced back by the end of June to within three miles of Verdun itself.

Meanwhile preparations had been going on for a joint Franco-British offensive on the Somme, chosen apparently because it was where the flanks of the two armies met. The offensive, which was preceded by a seven days' bombardment, did not actually begin until July 1st. It was not a moment too soon. So large was the number of troops required for the defence of Verdun that the French share in the operations on the Somme was small, but in spite of this it was not till the British offensive began that Verdun was out of danger.

The small success which was achieved in the first few days of the attack proved disappointing, but Haig, the British Commander-in-Chief, decided to persevere. The battle of the Somme continued through the summer and autumn, and in September tanks were given their first trial. By the end of the year the German line had withdrawn a few miles. The new positions were inferior to those which they had held when the campaign opened; but in compensation for this they had suffered many fewer casualties than the British.

CHAPTER I

RHEIMS

October 5th, 1916.

In the late Autumn of 1916 I was on a return journey to England from Chatel Guyon, where the base hospitals for Verdun were situated. I had spent four months there, assisting French surgeons by administering anæsthetics, and in Paris I was fortunate enough to obtain, through their intervention, a *sauf-conduit* to visit Rheims.

Acting on advice to be early at the station I started at 7 a.m. in heavy rain. A long queue, composed mostly of soldiers, had collected in front of the *guichet*, and when I got through to the Epernay platform I found it encumbered with crowds of weary, rather unclean *poilus* who had exhausted their *permissions* and were returning to the Front. They lounged about in attitudes that betokened fatigue rather than dejection, and several lay fast asleep on the platform.

My *sauf-conduit* underwent severe scrutiny before I was permitted to take a place in the ticket queue; it was again closely examined at the *guichet* leading to the train and also in the train, together with the passes of the officers who filled the compartment, one of whom the military conductor apparently regarded with some suspicion. He was overhauled very closely and asked where the regiment to which he belonged was quartered six months ago, where it was three months ago, where it was to-day, etc.

The French officers in our crowded compartment made a good impression. They looked fit, intelligent and alert, and their conversation indicated confidence and keenness, but they had that prematurely aged look that is stamped on all young faces that for months together have faced the enemy and endured the dangers and hardships of the front line.

Our party of sightseers numbered eight. We were strangers to one another, but on quitting the train we drew together. I soon discovered that four were Press correspondents; two from remote corners of the earth (an American from Columbia and a tall weedy individual from Chile), and two were repre-

sentatives of French provincial newspapers, while a kind and courteous Monsieur Monod, from the Press Department of the Affaires Étrangères, had been deputed to shepherd our little band. There were also two privileged Englishwomen, besides myself. I gathered that they had lately returned from raising considerable sums of money for the French Red Cross in America.

At Epernay we were met by two large grey military cars sent by the *État Major*. They were under the charge of a junior Avion lieutenant.

Twenty-eight kilometres separate Epernay from Rheims, but we met no traffic on the road, except military lorries, and one or two small cars driven by officers.

As we approached Rheims, the road, in places that would otherwise have been visible to the enemy, was screened by long stretches of canvas raised to a considerable height, and disguised on the off side by large branches and by small dead trees stuck into the ground.

Bowling rapidly along we caught, from a distance, a fine view of Rheims. The cathedral, towering over the town, appeared intact, and at first sight it was difficult to believe that it had suffered as much as has been described, but on entering the suburbs, ruin and desolation are at once apparent. In some quarters a few houses remained unscathed, but in others whole streets are in ruins, or at best, the houses stand with their windows blown out, and with *persiennes* clinging to the walls sometimes by a single nail.

A protective rampart of sandbags had been raised in front of the cathedral, but, unfortunately, this was only done after most of the statues and reliefs had been destroyed. High up a few beautiful figures can still be seen, some in perfect—some in partial—preservation, but by far the greater number have been blasted into mere trunks of stone, while the great stained-glass rose-window above the main entrance has been almost entirely destroyed. As we passed into the cathedral the sun shone brightly through a few small coloured fragments that still hang aloft. Inside the cathedral all the dim religious half-tones of light and shade are gone. The whole vast interior is seen in a crude, harsh light that streams through the shattered roof and blasted windows, while under foot the pavement is a welter of dirt and rubble, of puddles and bird-lime. The only conspicuous object still remaining inside the cathedral is a gigantic bronze

thirteenth-century bell. This lies in three huge fragments just where it had crashed down.

The *trésor* and tapestries have been removed to safety, but things of minor value have been left. Gilt-framed, rain-drenched pictures still cling to niches and pilasters, and up near the great Coronation Altar of the kings of France, the small Joan of Arc alcove is still intact; her statue gone, its place marked by a pathetic little cotton tricolor flag that some patriotic *poilu* had spread out on the stone pavement in front. As I stood on the altar steps and stared down the ruined spaces, the cathedral, though so destroyed and desecrated, seemed still to be pervaded by an immanent ineffaceable spirit of grandeur and of beauty.

On leaving the cathedral we were taken to see the complete destruction and obliteration of the once beautiful *archevêché* and also of the *Cérès* quarter, where not one stone has been left standing on another. After this, it seemed magical to find oneself only a few minutes later, having luncheon in the quite undamaged *cour intérieure* of a peaceful little inn, the walls covered with Virginian creeper, and everything rosy and serene in the October sunshine.

After our *déjeuner* I basked in the welcome warmth of the sun outside while the Press correspondents lingered over their coffee, and my two compatriots in comic, unfluent French accosted an old couple in the street and picked their brains for "anecdotes".

Eventually the Avion lieutenant got us all under way, reunited by a *permission* to visit the lines of the first position. Only two small cars were allowed to proceed, so tightly packed together we rattled out through suburbs dotted with pretty ruined villas. After leaving Rheims the wire entanglements straggled out from the edge of the fields on to the road itself, leaving only a narrow central passage for traffic, and this was screened almost uninterruptedly with canvas. Presently the cars pulled up and we walked a short distance before entering the *boyau-braconnier* which communicates with the trenches. Except for that small residue of essential difference that always exists between reality and imitation, these are very much what photographs and cinemas have led one to expect.

After what seemed an interminable walk we reached a shallow *abris*, where we were received (rather than welcomed) by the Brigadier and his Second in Command.

The *abris* was very much like an Auvergne *chaumière* (or an Irish cabin), not much better and not much worse, but the deeper

shelters, proof against heavy shells, are dismal subterranean places, hot, dark and completely unventilated. They are reached by lurching forward down long narrow flights of slippery mud steps. We were shown several of these shelters and all alike were crowded with sleeping *poilus*. At night the men are on watch in the trenches, and through the day they sleep off fatigue in these deep shelters. When we regained the trenches I enjoyed a stirring little experience. The Commanding Officer beckoned from a short way in front and all of a sudden I realized that we were standing in an advanced observation post, within fifty metres of the German lines. The whole intervening space was densely netted over with low barbed wire. I could see close and clear the village of Cernay, nestling under the wooded hill that has enabled the Germans to dominate not only Rheims but the whole of these positions. The little village looked quite peaceful and friendly and so completely French in character that it revolted one to think the Germans could be there, firmly dug into French soil, within fifty metres of where we stood. The officer handed me his powerful field-glasses, and through them I could distinguish a few German soldiers crossing an open bit of road that connected two trenches on the rising ground behind and beyond Cernay. A *soixante-quinze* fired and was answered and later we saw a *mitrailleuse* firing; it makes a horrible mechanical noise: a rattling sound not unlike a magnified cricket-bat drawn along an iron railing. Owing to its inexorable regularity the noise is far more frightening to the uninformed than is the whistling flight of a *soixante-quinze*.

The Brigadier was a middle-aged, fine looking man with a wise, keen face. The roughness of the surroundings had not deprived him of that curious, graceful courtesy which is the hall-mark of every educated Frenchman. He was obviously admired and beloved by officers and men, all of whom appeared to be extremely young. The regiment—or what survives of it—is resting here after a spell of Verdun. During that time it had passed eighteen days *dans la fournaise*, as they describe Verdun, and six days closely confined in one of the forts, without any relief, or fresh food of any sort. The Brigadier said that these so-called forts are really subterranean caves. He spoke of it all quite simply and unaffectedly but with an intensity of feeling that an Englishman would have been not only unwilling but unable to express. He drew a vivid picture of the appalling noise, the suffocation, sleeplessness, heat and *abrutissement*. Under these

conditions his mind, so he said, ceased to function. He just went on doing things instinctively, sustaining strength through the night by sucking meat lozenges, drawn from a discarded haversack, and refilling his rifle with *cartouches* dragged from beneath the body of a dead comrade. When questioned he admitted that he had been wounded twice, but spoke of this very lightly. I tried to hint appreciative things, but he answered rather sternly, in words I shall remember, "*Ne vous trompez pas, Madame, tout homme blessé est un homme diminué*"—diminished, he said, not in physical soundness only but in nervous stability. Therein lies the lasting tragedy of *les grands blessés*.

He gave me and my English companions a handful of poppies and cornflowers, snatched quickly from the top of the trench, and this was followed, when after a zig-zag walk we reached the officers' shelter, by more sustaining refreshment in the shape of wine and biscuits. After having trudged through two kilometres of winding trenches they were not unwelcome. The officers rather humorously describe their shelter as *La salle des fêtes*. The *revers de la médaille*, in the way of souvenirs, was to find a number of horrible insects attached to our clothing, also tenacious odours of rats dead and alive and other untouchable horrors.

As we threaded our way back, in Indian file, to the rear of the position, a fantastic sight came into view. Two Boche Avions were endeavouring to cross the French lines at a height of about 1,500 metres. It was about four o'clock and the sky was intensely blue. The Avions seemed to defy the guns, which exploded, leaving puffs of delicate white smoke that looked like pieces of white cotton-wool floating against an immense blue counterpane. As the Avions rose beyond range of one battery they seemed to come within reach of another, and for a few minutes the blue sky was covered with flakes of wool. But the Avions climbed higher and higher, and presently got past the defence and dropped some bombs over a suburb of the town before being driven back, at an immense height and almost out of sight, to their own lines.

On the return journey to Paris our party drew together and conversation gravitated inevitably towards *la guerre* and conflicting politics. The journalists criticized every leader in every country. They never doubted but that they could have run the war far better themselves. It was not easy to remain discreetly silent, and yet, leaving strategy on one side, will it not be largely

owing just to the courage and endurance of ordinary people that we shall win this war? "*Les grands hommes sont les hommes obscurs.*"

October 11th, 1916.

Less than a week later I discarded my picturesque *Croix Rouge* cloak and veil, and arrayed myself, following G.H.Q. instructions, in strictly utilitarian British Red Cross uniform (as Vice-President of the Kingston Division of Surrey). I left Paris full of eagerness and excitement to see the British Front where, up the present, no women visitors have been allowed. I left the train at Amiens, and was met by Major-General Davidson and Philip Sassoon.¹ Their G.H.Q. motor took us to the Hôtel du Rhin where, although it is crowded with soldiers, they had succeeded in reserving for me a bed in a tiny attic. In it I gratefully deposited my diminutive kit-bag and we then motored out to Deraincourt.

On the road we passed several long trails of munition waggons and lorries, and also some very tired looking troops returning from the lines. These columns of traffic are so perfectly regulated that in places where two roads cross, time is calculated to such a nicety that neither column is held up, the one usually coming up as the cross traffic passes out of sight. Large numbers of German prisoners were working on the roads in order to keep them as far as possible in tolerable condition. These prisoners had been taken in the recent advance. At the beginning of the war all prisoners were sent to England to be interned, and it is a new practice making use of them in this way on the roads.

The G.H.Q. car passed unchallenged through successive groups of sentries, and presently reached Deraincourt, where it turned on to a very bad road, deep in mud and ruts and holes. Soon the road became impassable and we had to leave the car and walk some distance, in the face of a high wind, across rolling open country towards the little town of Albert. We scrambled across several lines of trenches that had been occupied by our troops as recently as last July. They were less well designed and much less deep than the French ones that I had seen at Rheims last week. When we reached the slope overlooking Albert, we could see quite clearly the shell-wrecked church and the already legendary little figure of the Virgin Mary. In spite of shells she has not fallen but is still uplifted as if by a miracle,

¹ Sir Philip Sassoon, Bart., M.P., Private Secretary to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, C.-in-C. British Armies in France, 1915-18.

clinging unaccountably to the base of the spire. Beyond Albert the ground rises again and the whole country widens out into a splendid panorama.

Thiepval lay away on the left. The ridge on the extreme left and on a line with Thiepval is still partly held by the Germans. The land itself is the abomination of desolation. Where fields and villages used to grace the landscape nothing now remains but mounds of rubble and deep craters of tormented, torn-up earth. A few trees against the horizon are stripped not only of their leaves but even of branches. They look like crooked, tipsy telegraph poles.

In front lay Pozières and Comtalmaison, and out beyond Albert and a little to the right of it we saw what once was Fricourt, a village now entirely pounded off the face of the earth—nothing remains but a heap of dust and smashed fragments of stone.

Guillemont, which proved a costly prize, and was only taken after the third attack, lies a little to the right, and Combles, still more to the right, were hardly visible from where we stood.

Philip Sassoon had brought some sandwiches and these we ate seated on the damp ground, sheltered from a boisterous wind by an immense dump of sandbags. After cigarettes, we walked on again, and instead of the occasional flash of a gun, or passing cloud of smoke from high explosive, we saw the whole Pozières-Thiepval horizon come under a barrage of German fire. The smoke of the German guns is black, not white like ours, and for more than an hour we stood there just watching, while sinister clouds of smoke showed continually on the horizon. From the British trenches an occasional flare of red went up to assist aviators and to signal the whereabouts of our troops.

Several of our aeroplanes came over, making for hangars, many miles behind, and tales were told of gallant deeds and especially of the prowess of a young fellow, named Albert Ball, who has just brought down his thirtieth Boche aeroplane, is aged 19, and lives to tell the tale. We stood for a long while rivetted by the strange Satanic scene—but, at last, it was a relief to turn away. The ground which we were treading, the shell-holes we avoided, are broken patches of the battlefield of only a short month ago. It was here and then that Raymond Asquith's brilliant promise was extinguished and my dear nephew, Charles Feversham,¹ was killed, and on the grey horizon beyond Albert

¹ 2nd Earl of Feversham. He was killed a few days later.

there are, at this moment, thousands of fellow-countrymen, their trenches the playground for shells bursting so thickly and continuously that General Davidson thought they must herald an impending attack. The scene had a Lucifer, Prince of Darkness kind of splendour, but uppermost in my mind was a sense of the wickedness and waste of life, the lack of any definite objective commensurate with all this destruction, desolation and human suffering.

.

When I met General Davidson in Paris last week, I had told him how much I hoped to see a casualty clearing station, and he undertook to make it possible, so to-day, after regaining the car, we turned towards Heilly and Hospitals 36 and 38. It seems that a clearing station might more fitly be described as a clearing *camp*. Hospital 36 is laid out close to the railhead and consists of rows and rows of tents able to accommodate 11,000 and more. There were to-day only a few hundred wounded and some of these were lying outside, waiting to be evacuated by the next train. It all seemed well planned and organized, clean and sanitary, but I saw no means of warming the tents and winter is not far distant. In command of the station is a Colonel Thompson, and he it was who took us round. Clearing stations are the nearest point to the front at which nursing sisters are permitted to work. At 4 p.m. there were not many to be seen and, no doubt, orderlies do all the heavy part of the work. The sisters (for there are no probationers or V.A.D.s here) take charge of the worst cases as soon as they leave the surgeon's hands, and it is they who subsequently do most of the dressings. It is towards nightfall that the convoys are brought in, and after the cases have been sorted out in the receiving tent, Colonel Thompson's five surgeons operate in different canvas shelters while the sisters attend, unassisted, to the relatively lighter cases.

The beds are very small and have only one regulation blanket on the top of the coarsest of unbleached sheets. In the officer's tent the only difference made (but religiously observed) is that a coloured cotton quilt instead of a white one covers the regulation blanket. Except for this mark of somewhat chilly, comfortless distinction, everything is identical. In the officer's tent the faces were, almost without exception, the faces of mere boys. Special tents are set apart for abdominal wounds, for chest wounds, for eyes, for gas-gangrene, etc., and of course separate

tents for the Boches. Amongst these one lonely figure, still on a forgotten stretcher, was lying with his face turned to the wall. Unlike others, he did not speak nor even look round as we passed through, and remains in memory a lonely pathetic figure.

I should have liked to linger in the tents, but men are always ill at ease in hospitals and my companions were eager to be gone, so we started, all too soon, for General Rawlinson's headquarters. He is living in a house that is fairly large but very rickety and ramshackle; there seemed to be no luxuries, unless a grass-grown disused lawn tennis court may be reckoned as a potential one. Bitter tea—ready mixed with preserved milk—was distributed from out of a large bath-can at a long dining-table.

Numberless Staff Officers passed in and out and after tea General Rawlinson showed me his room, the walls of which are hung all round with enormous maps. His personality is not impressive, he is rather short though well built, and his face has a sharp though sympathetic expression. This Fourth Army of his has, it is said, done wonders. I found Dickie Sutton¹ acting temporarily as A.D.C. Meeting him recalled my beloved nephew Desmond Fitzgerald, who was much attached to him and believed him to be one in a thousand.

We got away pretty late and I was hurriedly deposited in Amiens, General Davidson and Philip Sassoon motoring back to General Headquarters.

In the hotel there was an unceasing *va et vient* of officers, so that I at once abandoned all hope of securing a bath. Apparently when the day's work is done all those officers who can get a few hours' leave come in here to wash and dine. Squeezed into a dark corner of the crowded dining-room I shared a little table with the wife of a French officer who was waiting in Amiens on the chance of her husband getting a day's leave. Every table had more people than it could comfortably hold and there were quite as many French officers as English.

AMIENS, ETAPLES AND BOULOGNE—VIA HESDIN

October 12th, 1916.

This morning, after an early 8 o'clock breakfast, I was writing up this diary in the hall of the Hôtel du Rhin, when to my surprise I caught sight of Lord Ernest Hamilton limping down the stairs.

¹ Sir Richard Sutton returned soon after to his regiment and was killed. Lord Desmond Fitzgerald had been killed already.

He looked forlorn and downhearted and said that he had been sent by Arthur Balfour and the Committee of Defence to visit the whole Somme front, to see everything there was to see, and generally to collect material for writing a history of the events now in progress. General headquarters, where he had been, had, however, raised insuperable obstacles—"nothing can be published until the end of the war. Correspondents are here already. It is difficult to spare a car. If one is lent it must run at your private expense, etc." He seemed much discouraged and looked not unlike one of the sad long-legged clipped-winged storks that are the renowned denizens of the pond in the walled garden at the back of this hotel, *triste*, damp and defeated.

One thing he told me that went far to explain what had seemed yesterday rather inexplicable optimism on the part of General Rawlinson's Staff. The Germans have asked for an armistice to enable them to evacuate French territory and take up another line in Belgium. The French, whose villages and towns are being bombarded out of existence, had been inclined to negotiate, but the British Government had stiffened them to a refusal. Such is the story.

At 10 a.m. Colonel Black, Sir Arthur Sloggett's¹ A.D.C., arrived to motor me down to Hesdin. I tossed my valise and gipsy bundle into the car and we set out for Sloggett's Headquarters. But before leaving Amiens I wanted to see something of its hospitals and persuaded Colonel Black to stop for half an hour at the large New Zealand one, located partly in a convent and partly in another building hard by. This New Zealand hospital is being run by the same unit that lost nine or ten of its Sisters in an ammunition ship that was torpedoed in the Mediterranean last October.

My impression that hospitals at the Front might be made more comfortable without incurring much additional transport or expense is confirmed. The indispensable is indeed provided but absolutely nothing else. The officers' ward was again identical with those of the men except for the honourable but chilly distinction of flowery cotton bed-quilts.

On the road to Hesdin we met numbers of troops and ammunition lorries, and passed several dumps or depots of ammunition, stored in gigantic tents. The hangars for the aeroplanes are also

¹ Lieut.-General Sir A. J. H. Sloggett, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., was the organizer of all the British hospitals in France.

made of canvas, and are wonderful examples of camouflage. Some are painted to look, from above, like houses, some merely daubed over with great irregular splotches of brown, red or green. Strange that these apparently conspicuous decorations should render them invisible.

Arriving at Hesdin about 1 p.m. we found Sir Arthur Sloggett lodged in a much more comfortable dwelling than are those nearer the front and apparently well supplied with good food and good books.

Mr. Robinson,¹ editor of *The Times*, came to luncheon from Headquarters, where he has been staying, and there were six or seven other guests connected with the direction and organization of the Medical Service.

Sloggett is not unlike Mr. Punch—a breezy manner and a crimson nose—quick, vain, irritable, kindhearted; not quite obviously the right man in the right place—at least, such was my first impression. But after luncheon he talked very intelligently during our long *tête-à-tête* drive to Etaples, which is his creation, and of which he is inordinately proud. He has an open mind, a hatred of red-tape, and is presumably an able if extravagant administrator; still, I should prefer to see a younger and more serious-minded man in his place. The work in hand seems to need such concentrated, single-minded devotion and energy. Should not Sloggett visit the clearing stations at the front, or if he cannot go himself should he not at least send up a very capable deputy? and above all agitate until conditions are improved?

Why are men and Army surgeons killed in such appalling numbers? By digging deeper, more effectual shelters, medical officers and wounded would be to some extent protected. It would seem too that operating tents or shelters might be improvised farther forward so that severe cases might be spared the long hours of waiting and the frequent unprofitable examinations and fatally long delays at non-operating stations.

A recrudescence of gas-gangrene is a feature of the present offensive. It is said to develop in a very few hours and to be due to the germ-impregnated condition of the soil. This tendency can only be countered by early operations, and though some cases reach the clearing station in seven or eight hours, others, unfortunately, take much longer.

Etaples is a vast, confused agglomeration of camp hospitals

¹ Geoffrey Robinson, Editor of *The Times* 1912-1919 and again 1923-1941 (assumed the name of Dawson by Royal Licence in 1917).

and railway sidings. The laundry is the largest in existence and washes for all the hospitals collectively and for the camp besides. There is also an immense sweet-smelling bakery, in which by day and by night bread is baked unintermittently for tens of thousands of mouths. Two hundred men are employed in it. There is a fresh meat store on the same scale. This I avoided.

The other part of Etaples consists of miles and miles and rows and rows of hospital huts. Of these the St. John of Jerusalem Hospital is considered to be the show one, and the most cheerful.¹ After Etaples we went to see Le Touquet and the Duchess of Westminster's Hospital for Officers. The Duke of Westminster financed it for some months during the early days of the war, but it has long since been taken over by the Red Cross. It seemed excellent and the atmosphere was cheery and contented.

While at the St. John's Hospital at Etaples, we went into the Boches' ward, a long, low hut in which we found all the beds occupied. A severe elderly sister was in charge, because of an exceptional qualification, that of being able to speak a little German. She had just been transferred from a British ward and was not in a happy humour. A German convoy had arrived only two hours before. Until quite recently a regulation has been in force forbidding German prisoners to smoke. Sloggett's good sense and good nature prompted him to issue a counter-order saying that they may smoke as much as they please. Because of this the shrew Sister could not disguise her indignation. She even ventured to say to Sloggett: "Why *should* they smoke?" to which he replied: "Why *shouldn't* they?" After this somewhat unrhretorical passage of arms he placated the sister by inviting her to interpret for him. At his request she grudgingly inquired of one of the men where he had been wounded, and how long ago? The answer was fairly satisfactory. "Thirty-six hours ago, near Morval."

Certainly, in some ways we are not a cultured nation. Neither¹ Sir Arthur Sloggett, nor I, nor Mr. G. Robinson (editor of *The Times*), nor either of the medical officers who were with us could speak sufficient German to hazard a few words with the prisoners. It seemed rather inhuman to be there just staring at them as though they were a circus, so, desecring an officer who looked decent and well-educated, I took a hesitating plunge into Italian and was fortunate in receiving a fluent, if guttural Italian reply.

¹ Bombed June 1918.

BOULOGNE

October 13th.

Sir Almroth Wright called for me this morning at 9 a.m. and took me to Hospital 13, where he has his laboratory. The great progress made since the beginning of the war in the treatment of wounds and of septicæmia is due to his discoveries and to those of the Franco-American doctor, Carel. We passed through wards that were literally packed with beds—beds everywhere, even precariously propped up on the steps of the wide staircase as well as made up on mattresses thrown down on the landings. Almroth Wright's laboratory is at the top of the building in a kind of glass verandah opening on to a terrace. He has a fellow research worker of Danish extraction who after being a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford became a British subject.

Sir Almroth was wonderfully kind and helpful, showing me under a microscope every variety of "streptococci" and "staphylococci", red corpuscles and white corpuscles and the gangrene bacillus that has proved so difficult to cultivate. Various tubes contained samples of it in different stages of growth and development. In ordinary conversation, Sir Almroth is slightly nebulous and incoherent, but complicated scientific things he explains with the utmost lucidity.

Just now he is concentrating on gangrene, but is not very confident of finding a panacea. Gangrene grows (or declines to grow) in all manner of capricious, unorthodox ways, the most recent surprise being a culture grown successfully in a tube from which air had *not* been excluded.

I am to dine with Sir Almroth, the Dane, and Sargent,¹ the specialist for head wounds, to-night. He is the surgeon who fought vainly to save poor, gifted, gallant Julian Grenfell's life in May 1915.

In the afternoon an A.D.C. of Sloggett's was told off to take me round all the principal hospitals in Boulogne, with the result that I have seen so many wards and so many wounded that I should like never to enter a hospital (as a mere visitor) again.

Valadier, an American, achieves plastic reconstructions of shattered jaws and obliterated noses by grafting fresh skin and flesh upon what remnants of these exist; a very slow, painful process and one which appears to be only relatively successful. After seeing Valadier's best efforts exemplified by some of the

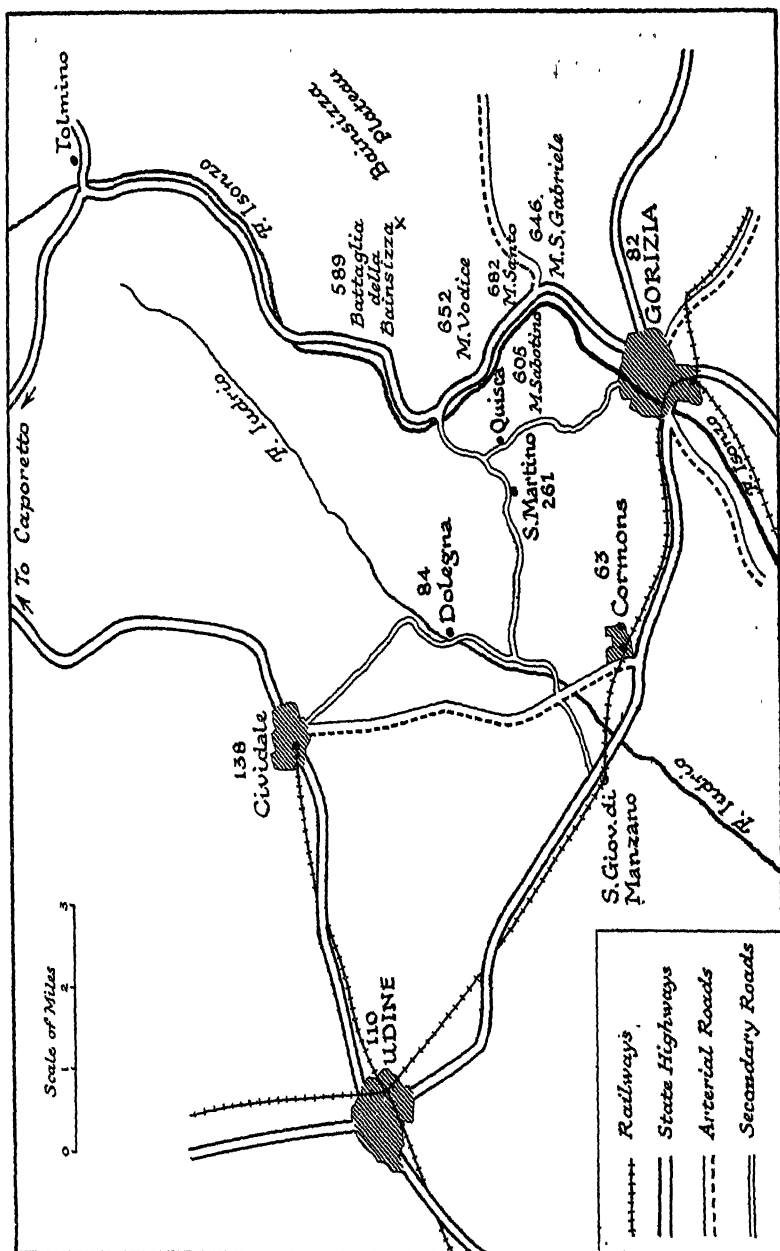
¹ Sir Percy Sargent, F.R.C.S.

men themselves as well as by a series of photographs, one has to admit that human interference with Nature is, from the æsthetic aspect, a maladroit affair.

The following day I returned, saddened and exhausted, to England. We passed some hours of anxious uncertainty as to whether the troop-laden boat would be able to leave owing to a submarine having sunk a ship, just in front of Wimereux, a little earlier in the day. Finally we got off, escorted by destroyers, and the whole deck densely packed with Tommies. I noticed that everyone now has the moral courage to strap quickly into a Gieve waistcoat or a lifebelt; a marked contrast to the demeanour of passengers eighteen months ago. At that time we all retired reluctantly into dark corners and furtively slipped on life-belts, afterwards endeavouring to conceal them with ulsters and overcoats.

General Sloggett and Colonel Black were in my compartment from Folkestone to London, more glad, gay and exuberant than even undergraduates could have been at the prospect of a week's leave in England.

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Sketch-map showing Dolegna and its surroundings

1917

THE ITALIAN FRONTS WITH THE SECOND ARMY

The prospects of the Entente for 1917 appeared good as a result of the fighting of the previous year, and it was resolved to undertake an offensive on all fronts. The Franco-British effort in the West, originally intended to begin on February 1st, had to be postponed because neither army was sufficiently prepared. The Germans took advantage of this to carry out a withdrawal on a large sector of their front to the already prepared "Siegfried" or, as the British call it, "Hindenburg" line, many miles in the rear. The unsatisfactory condition of the French army at this time rendered impossible any joint undertaking for the rest of the year, and it was the British who were responsible for the violent fighting in Flanders at Messines, Passchendaele and Cambrai.

In the East and South, the record of the Entente for the year was less satisfactory. The Revolution in Russia was followed by a state of almost complete inactivity on that front, only compensated by the entry of America into the war on the side of the Allies in April. In the South, Italy failed to accomplish anything decisive.

Since her entry into the war in 1915 Italy had been persistently attacking the Austrians on her northern frontier, yet at the end of 1916 there appeared little prospect of a speedy decision. When the campaign of 1917 opened she was once more trying to break through on the Isonzo. In May the Italians won a victory at Monte Kuk and gained a little ground; but after this there was no important fighting until August, when the chief objectives were Monte Santo, Monte Gabriele, and the bleak upland of the Bainsizza.

ITALY

"Enough if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour."

W. WORDSWORTH.

ZONA DI GUERRA, VENICE.

August 3rd, 1917.

Since the spring I have been living in my apartment at Venice and giving anæsthetics every morning at 6 a.m. for Professor Giordano at the Civil Hospital of SS. Giovanni e Paolo. In addition to being Sindaco, Giordano is the leading surgeon in Venice.

I had long wished to get to the Front, and was, therefore, very

glad to receive a letter from a member of the British Red Cross (in Italy) asking if I would consent to be Commandant of a small V.A. Detachment that it was intended to locate at Dolegna, the place destined to become the Clearing Station of the Second Army. An offensive towards Monte Santo and the Bainsizza was imminent. The letter urged me to come at once as the Red Cross Hut at the Clearing Station had to be organized as well as the quarters allotted to the British V.A. Detachment.

I telegraphed acceptance and I start to-morrow, August 4th, 1917, exactly three years after the commencement of the War.

OSPEDALETTO 13.

Monday, August 6th, 1917.

On arriving two days ago I found that the little house assigned to the British Red Cross Detachment at Dolegna and contiguous to the *Posto di Smistamento* or Clearing Station (literally "the sorting-place") is quite unready. Fresh plaster partitions have been put up in order to contrive small bedrooms out of one large attic, and in spite of tropical heat the walls are still sweating and damp.

It would seem that if a wooden *Baracca* had been run up for us on the edge of the camp itself it might well have been more convenient and less insanitary. The little house, though close to the river, wears, within and without, a cloak of thick white dust. It has been built jutting right out into the main road, so that the noise and vibration from the heavy lorries that are continually passing will make sleep uneasy if not impossible. Whenever an ammunition lorry crosses the bridge the whole house rocks and trembles, and just now these lorries pass at short intervals through the whole twenty-four hours.

The *Posto di Smistamento* consists of a camp enclosed by a strong fence. Within this enclosure wooden *baraccamenti* are being hastily built up. Inside these huts are placed rows of *Barelle* or stretcher beds, one above the other. There are five hospital sheds besides the *smistamento* itself; also sheds for sterilizing and for dressings and one for operations, but I gather this last will be little used. Those cases that urgently need operation will be sent to one of the two neighbouring *Ospedaletti*; less serious cases will be passed on towards the Base. Our British Red Cross hut has undertaken to supply First Aid appliances, splints and bandages, etc., besides fulfilling its initial purpose of providing the wounded with coffee, bread, biscuits, beef-tea, brandy, ice, lemonade, etc.

But the Red Cross Hut is even further from completion than the V.A.D.'s little house. An idea seems to prevail that there is plenty of time, and that the Offensive will be postponed until the 15th or 20th of August.

The authorities tell one little, but I gather that the pressure brought to bear on the Austrians will be greatest in this part of the Line and that Dolegna is to be the principal clearing station. Apparently the intention of G.H.Q. is to endeavour to get round Monte Santo and S. Gabriele from the north-west in the hope that the Austrians may retire to avoid being surrounded.

Dolegna—or rather the little river Judrio running through it—was formerly the boundary between Italy and Austria, and the house the *comando* have allotted to the British Red Cross was, until Italy came into the War, the Customs House. It has always been coloured a rosy red and is known throughout the countryside as Casa Rossa. It is built on the actual edge of the bridge on the Austrian side of the river. The lie of the land is just a wide, slightly undulating valley between ranges of hills. The spurs of Monte Santo are only ten kilometres distant, but they are partly hidden from sight by the rising ground that intervenes.

Dolegna, under normal conditions, must have been a green, happy valley. There are trees and long stretches of *gran' turco*, while farther away to the north-east are distant and very lovely soft, plum-coloured mountains. But the wilderness does not blossom like the rose—instead this green oasis is rapidly degenerating into a dust-heap. All round there are camps and camps and camps—and rows and rows of patient unsavoury mules and horses—tethered so close together as to be absolutely touching one another. This is done “to prevent them kicking”—so they say.

For the present I am staying in a rather lovely little villa—now transformed into Ospedaletto Number 13, at Novacuzza. I have a bed-sitting room to myself, contrived out of a little officers' ward, but it is not comfortable because it contains four beds besides my own and they take up all the space. The villa stands on rising ground, and the layout of the garden is simple and effective. Two tall cypresses flank a straight central path and frame a lovely view towards the distant hills. To this place, with its plot of green and a few unobtrusive flowers, I gladly and gratefully return at night. For the present sleep has to

be wooed in one place, food taken in another (at Mrs. Watkins's ¹ Casa di Riposo del Soldato), and work carried on in a third. But the crowning inconvenience is that I am separated from my very modest, but as I once thought absolutely indispensable, little suit-case. A minor tragedy is that Mrs. Watkins's hard-worked car has broken down, so that the choice of transport lies between a mediaeval two-wheeled mule-cart and a military *auto-carro*. This last tosses one about like a pea on a shovel and is a deep, inexhaustible nest of fleas.

Later.

Just back from endeavouring to obtain possession of Casa Rossa. Although essentials are lacking, the *État Major* insist on painting round the tiny living-room an altogether superfluous frieze of roses, thistles and shamrock. They are nice enough to say: "The vase must be worthy of the flowers," and overlook the melancholy fact that in the meantime the wilting flowers have no vase at all. However, the *État Major* vow they will send us four beds, four chairs and one table to-morrow.

Dr. Thompson called to-day, from the English hospital (for Italian soldiers) at Villa Trento. He anticipates a formidable offensive and thinks that Dolegna will be flooded with wounded. Certainly the numbers collected on this front are incredibly large, and although the hospitals round about are expanding to more than their utmost capacity, other preparations remain very inadequate, notably the scarcity of medical men and the complete absence of nurses.

August 7th.

I am firmly resolved to sleep at Casa Rossa to-night, even if it be on bare boards. In no other way can I hope to evict the workmen and be reunited to my suit-case and to a change of clothes. A *camion* from the *État Major* (*comando*) is by way of bringing beds and chairs and picking us up at 9 p.m. this evening.

This afternoon there has been continual artillery fire and two Austrian Drachens were brought down a mile from here by an aeroplane carrying a machine-gun. I watched the fight with

¹ Lord Monson was at the head of the British Red Cross in Italy but it was Mrs. Watkins who organized the Posto di Ristoro at Dolegna at the personal request of the General who commanded the XXIVth Army Corps. Gino Watkins, who lost his life on the British Arctic Air Route Expedition of 1930-31, was her grandson.

glasses from the high ground; the fighting plane looked very much like a hawk circling and hovering above its prey. Only airmen have been allowed to go near the place where the Drachens were brought down.

CASA ROSSA.

August 8th.

I and A. B., an efficient and muscular V.A.D. from the British Red Cross Hospital at Villa Trento, moved in late last night, arriving like gipsies with our caravan of furniture and cooking paraphernalia, literally at the eleventh hour. The furniture is the same for each of the five rooms. It consists of a hospital bed with one mattress, a tiny table, a tinier tripod iron washstand (not unlike a child's toy) and two pegs for clothes. Not the shadow of a drawer, though dust lies inches thick. The British Red Cross contributes enamel jugs and basins—but not what is their usual complement. (This may be a disguised blessing, as they would probably leak as freely as the battered basins.) “Roba di Guerra!” Before long nothing made since the beginning of the war will fulfil the purpose for which it was originally designed. The door-handles that we selected with such care at Udine decline to turn, and the lead pencils split (with laughter) at the mere idea of being susceptible of sharpening. All the same we are overjoyed to be here and near our work. Two soldier servants are promised for this week-end—a cook and a *cameriere*. As a set-off to these impending luxuries there is, so far, no *forno*¹ and no fuel. We eat omelettes cooked over a spirit lamp, and wash in leaking basins, with tepid cloudy water that is grudgingly disgorged by a pump in the back yard. The atmosphere suggests Mesopotamia and swarms of flies reinforce the parallel.

August 12th.

Days of “much troubling” and of incessant “Marthadoms” would weigh less heavily if the object for which they are undertaken were not continually receding. Originally fixed for August 4th, the Offensive was postponed a second time two days ago—to the 18th) and now the *maggiore* of the *smistamento* confides that *he* does not anticipate anything before the beginning of September.

Of the eight men employed in constructing our Red Cross

¹ Cooking stove.

baracca, five have been transferred to other work—so now it is quite clear that it will never be properly finished.

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To-day, at the Casa di Riposo, I met two Generals and their A.D.C.'s, and learned that the "morale" in this Second Army is far from good. It is whispered that men have fired on their officers, and that General Novello has been presiding over a court martial. At Gradisca (Freifeld) Italian soldiers boo the English, and say that it is only because of us English that the war goes on.

All this is unsettling. It seems foolish to spend a month idly waiting in this dust-swept, fly-blackened way-side, surrounded by insanitary camps and unable ever to fill one's lungs with a draught of clean air. On the other hand it is Cadorna's way to strike before the blow is expected, and were I to return to Venice I could not count on the telegram summoning me back getting through under thirty hours. To add to our dilemmas three more V.A.D.'s are panting to arrive. Under existing conditions they could only be an added inconvenience, for now that we have stained the deal furniture a bright and hideous yellow, and made little cheap blue cotton curtains to screen our rooms from curious eyes, there is nothing left for anyone to do. These considerations induce ingenious mendacity and I have managed to postpone the arrival of two V.A.D.'s. But the third one has already descended on us. She turns out to be an Englishwoman, born in China, but now married to a Bolognese Marchese, who is quartered near here with his regiment. He pays her frequent if fleeting visits and is hastily deposited by a passing military lorry. She has been installed in the room I so lately occupied in the *Ospedaleto*. A plump, blonde creature, she is obviously much less interested in the Red Cross than in her ebullient but elusive Sposo.

There is an Army regulation, somewhat loosely enforced in the Zona di Guerra, that officers' wives are not to receive passports, and I fear that the irregularity of her presence with the British Red Cross will presently get us into trouble. Her name is sonorous and to English ears diverting. It is nothing less than La Marchesa Rappini di Castel Delfino.

August 13th, Monday.

I and my special V.A.D. Companion, A. B. walked across the fields last evening to dine with Mrs. Watkins at Craoretto. The

little dinner was *al fresco* beneath a green arbour on the edge of a vineyard. Later we went to an improvised entertainment organized for their men by the officers of a machine-gun section that for several months has been quartered up the hill at the back of Craoretto.

The men are mostly Sardinian and Sicilian. The night was dark and we stumbled up a mule-path until we reached a little natural plateau crowded with soldiers. It was dimly lit by one guttering candle, shaded by a copy of the *Udine Gazette*. A bench had been provided for us three women, together with a table on which to stand the gramophone. This we had undertaken to provide and burdened with it we had toiled rather wearily up the hill. The hot unwashed men pressed closely round us and in the heavy air of the still *sirocco* night we all felt rather faint and exhausted.

Presently a little circle was cleared and five or six Sardinians stepped through a long monotonous Sardinian dance. Their feet moved very nimbly but almost without shifting their ground. They held hands in a circle to the accompaniment of an old paraffin tin beaten with two sticks. This and their manner of intoning was rather Oriental; it recalled nocturnal "fantasias" seen and improvised long ago in Egypt.

There followed a tarantella, quite wonderfully executed by a boy lieutenant and an older, good-looking rather heavily built man. All the courting and passion and murderous *stiletto* movements were rendered to perfection and the demonstrative Southern audience was stirred to enthusiastic applause, but in the excitement of watching the tarantella someone had unshaded the candle, and this drew to our little plateau the attentions of a huge searchlight. The C.O. immediately extinguished the candle, the tarantella broke off abruptly, and after a few minutes chatter and an exchange of compliments, we turned to go. Some of the N.C.O.'s (I think they were N.C.O.'s) walked down the hill with us, and were full of little jokes and good spirits and Sicilian animation . . . and soon these ingenious, harmless beings will be pushed into the impending furnace. Every day that war goes on I find it more ugly, wasteful, wicked and uncivilized.

We have now heard that President Poincaré is expected almost directly on a visit to this Front. Therefore there must, inevitably, be a few days' pause before the Offensive is launched. This being so I have decided to go back to my apartment in Venice

and snatch a brief respite from these noisy, dusty, suffocating days and nights.

PALAZZO GIUSTINIAN,
CANAL GRANDE,
VENICE.

August 15th, Wednesday.

Yesterday morning I and A. B. left Dolegna at 8 a.m., a *camion* taking us (and the washing) to a treasure of a laundress discovered by the ubiquitous *maggiore*. She lives on the brink of a rushing stream halfway up a steep and lovely hill that rises behind Cividale.

On the road the King of Italy, President Poincaré, Sonnino ¹ *e tutti quanti* crossed our modest conveyance in a string of motor-cars. Cividale looked very animated and beflagged, and our shopping (which consisted mainly of a search for rat-traps) was not easily accomplished. Incidentally, rat-traps are *à prix d'or*—large ones, that is—for Dolegna rats are like Disney monsters.

The train for Udine was not due to leave until the afternoon, and both A. B. and the *camion* were wanted back at Dolegna, so the Priest-Sergeant, who had us in charge, took me to the Ospedale Orseola, formerly an Ursuline convent. It proved a welcome, pleasant refuge from the streets and from the chaffing attentions of the *mousquetaire* type of men who thronged the baking, crowded Piazza and restaurants. Red Cross uniform secured not only a welcome, but a bowl of *café-au-lait* in the little convent parlour, for which remuneration was firmly and gracefully refused. Later two friendly and very vocal Italian Red Cross nurses came in for luncheon. With the exception of three rooms the entire convent is now in the hands of the *sanità*. It is built round a little flower-garden, once a cloister, and is reserved exclusively for cases of nervous break-down—sad, rudderless wreckage from the strains and shocks of war. There were here to-day fourteen officers and one hundred and three men. There could be no mistake about the numbers because a uniformed official was chalking them up on a black slate by the door as I came in.

Never, not even in South Africa, have I experienced so much heat and dust as when travelling yesterday from Cividale to Udine in a densely packed military train—and from Udine on to Mestre in a not less crowded *diretto*. It had proved impossible to get a telegram through to my gondolier, so I climbed the

¹ Sonnino was at this time the Italian Prime Minister.

stairs of the old *palazzo* quite unexpected at 10 p.m. escorted by an exhilarated porter who had reeled cheerfully along the edge of the little canals singing and whistling and balancing on his head my suit-case. Fortunately my *Guisippina* was even more delighted than astonished to see me, and produced a magical little supper. But there was short rest for the weary because a bombing raid roused all Venice early this morning; the Ospedale Civile got a direct hit; not on the modernized surgical side but by ill-luck right through the sixteenth-century painted ceiling of the Sala S. Marco. Several patients were killed and twenty-seven injured. In addition two large modern houses, built as workmen's dwellings, have been destroyed at Madonna del Orto, and there has been some damage at the Arsenal, which, together with the railway station, is always the principal objective. But whether the damage be great or small—the secret is well kept and no one hears to what extent the Arsenal has suffered. To-day my two servants are haggard from the effects of *lo Spavento*. Venetians seem to agree that it has been the worst visitation of the summer, but with the hard common-sense, so peculiarly Italian, and so distinct from the character with which British opinion credits Italians, they regard it as the inevitable reply to the bombing raid three days since on Pola. The *ronzino*, the bombing, the *cannonata* and the alarm all sounded simultaneously at 4 a.m. At 6 a.m. the attack was over, but about 8 a.m. two machines returned; sailing for bravado insolently low over the Grand Canal. However, during the first raid three aeroplanes were brought down. Two men from a machine which came down near the Fondamenta Nuova were alive and uninjured. The men in the other machines were killed. Little de Geoffre, one of the French Aviation mission that is quartered at the Lido, brought down one plane at sea. Four aeroplanes is a big bag for the *Difesa*, and even the *popolo* are reassured and encouraged by this tangible success. But for me the raid has been the last straw, and I am *sur le flanc* (as my mother used to say when completely extenuated). Also, the prevailing war zone malady holds me in its loathsome grip. Still these things are quite endurable because it is so good and refreshing to be here and able to rest for hours on a cool soft bed.

August 17th, Friday.

At 4 p.m. came a telegram summoning me back to Dolegna. I leave for Udine by the first train to-morrow.

CHAPTER III

A CASUALTY CLEARING STATION

On August 18th the Italians heralded their offensive on the Isonzo with a shattering bombardment. In the South success followed, but around Tolmino they made little progress. After the fall of Jelenik they stormed and carried the Austrian trenches between Vodice and Kuibilek (on August 23rd-24th) and the way was open for an advance across the Bainsizza plateau.

“Trodden and bruised to a dusty tomb
Are ears that have greened but will never be gold,
And flowers in the bud that will never bloom.”

“The Dynasts”, THOS. HARDY.

CASA ROSSA, DOLEGNA.

August 18th, Saturday, 1 p.m.

I arrived an hour since. At Udine I went straight to the Headquarters of the British Mission and sought the assistance of Colonel Delmé-Radcliffe.¹ An hour later he found time to bring me out here himself. Fighting in the hills had begun, and he was motoring on to observe progress.

I find things at Casa Rossa in some confusion. An hour before I arrived the High Command had peremptorily ejected the Marchesa Rappini di Castel Delfino. We are left with a pair of soiled cuffs and one slipper as the only traces of her romantic passage. Of the other Red Cross helpers, two have arrived, but *en revanche*, one of them is ill. The *baracca* in which we are to work is chaotic. Plasterers are still plastering, and doors and windows are lying on the ground. We are bribing workmen to stay on till midnight in order to finish, at least, the *forno*.² By fair means or foul we are determined to provide hot coffee and soup when the wounded begin to arrive towards morning.

Needless to say we are without any of the things promised. No tables, no lock to our store-room, no bin for coffee, of which

¹ Colonel Delmé-Radcliffe, Military Attaché to the British Embassy in Rome, was at the same time head of the British Military Mission at the Italian G.H.Q. of the Armies in the Field.

² Oven.

fifty kili lie scattered on the floor, chucked down anyhow amidst damp plaster and rubbish.

Y. Z., a nice vigorous type of V.A.D. from Villa Trento, and Miss Brown, an *ingénue* from Rome, will be on duty till 4 a.m. this first night. A. B. has the universal "upset" in an acute form, plus a temperature of 103°. I am much better for my two days' rest in Venice. The wounded are beginning to come in.

August 19th.

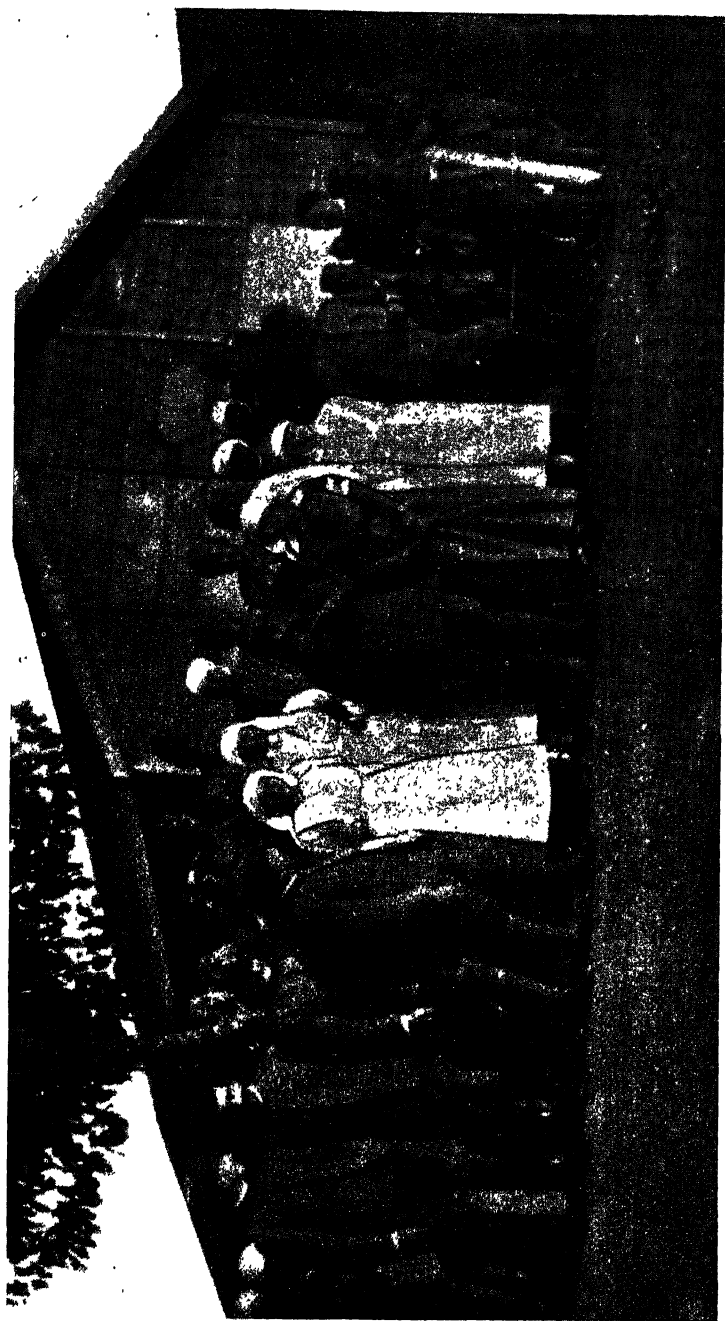
Went on duty again at 6 a.m. Fed over a hundred men before 11 a.m. There were bad stretcher cases and some ugly heads. My next eight hours' shift will be from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. Evening and night are expected to bring us more wounded than the daylight hours. Grave cases are detained a little while, just long enough to be examined, and are then transferred to Ospedaletto 97. All the lighter cases are passed on within a few hours towards the Base. We are having great difficulties owing to inadequate canteen appliances. However, bigger cans and *pentole* are expected to-morrow, and an extra man for the kitchen. The First Aid things are provided by the British Red Cross, and are, therefore, in abundance. The work is distressing. Many men are grievously mutilated, and there is so very little we can do.

Those suffering from shell-shock look as though they were drunk. They stagger and seem half dazed. They cannot walk straight and just lurch along anyhow. The surgeons do not wish them to be given any stimulant or nourishment. They are placed in fresh ambulances for the Base, generally with only one attendant. I think that the majority go no farther than the Cividale Hospital for nervous wrecks, the same *ci-davant* Orseola Convent where I perched the other day on my way to Venice.

The guns began last night about 11 p.m. and since then the noise has been uninterrupted and deafening. At dawn it increased in intensity. After that the infantry attack must have been launched, for the thunder seemed to die down, unless perhaps the clamour of our noisily awaking camp dulled and deadened the sound?

August 21st.

These last two days there has been no time to write. The camp has been submerged beneath an ever rising tide of wounded.



*Casualty Clearing Station, Dolegna, August 1917
In centre, Italian Army Medical Staff and British V.A. Detachment*

Seven hundred and seventy passed through yesterday. There is little method and no discipline, indeed, no one is obviously in authority. I don't know where the *maggiore* disappears to. One is far too busy to enquire. All things considered, confusion and oversights might have been worse.

Later.

There are rumours that Pazzi (the *maggiore*) has been given a wider command, and perhaps this it is that has taken him away? The system—or lack of one—seems to be that the surgeons *all* stay on duty unintermittently for the first forty-eight to sixty hours, after which exhaustion topples them over one by one and they reappear only after a *riposo* of uncertain duration. It may be two, six or even as much as ten hours.

I have been pressed (in the mornings) into the shed reserved for surgical dressings, and A. B. (who shares my hours of duty) has successfully organized a service of *piantoni* to help her in the *smistamento*. There are moments of overwhelming rush and confusion, and the *smistamento baracca* is always full. Stretchers are laid on the floor and when there are no more stretchers, the wounded are somehow hoisted on to the backs of the *portaferiti* and are carried in and laid on the *barelle* that run down one side of the sorting shed. The lighter cases are herded on to the benches that run down the other side. The men all seem extenuated with hunger and fatigue. “*Quattro giorni senza mangiare*” is constantly in one's ears, and incredible as it may seem, I believe that were it not for the British Red Cross there would be no provision, other than black coffee, made for the men, even here.

Yesterday there passed through the camp a number of Austrian wounded. I think some of them were Germans; anyway, one was a tenor from the Opera House in Hanover. His poor face was concealed by a sanguinary mask of bandages. It was only possible to give nourishment by means of an india-rubber tube passed underneath. It seemed as though gangrene had already set in, yet he wrote down an anxious enquiry as to whether we thought he would ever “be able to sing again” . . .

We get a very large number of head cases, also of shattered legs and arms, but so far few “abdominals”. I sometimes suspect that the medical officers at the Front leave them purposely on one side. Probably they think it is no use bringing down desperate cases . . . best to give a fighting chance to

those who may win through. But the sadness and horror of it all. . . . Those in a quite hopeless condition the surgeons generally leave in the ambulances. These hold six stretchers, three shelves on each side, one above the other. We find the surgeons disinclined to do anything but pass these cases on just as they are. Sometimes we give them coffee, sometimes lemonade, or a little Marsala, sometimes nothing, according to where they are wounded and according to their general condition. We try never to let a single *camion* move off without giving the men at least a pillow or a scrap of ice to suck and a few encouraging words. They are almost more grateful for kindness than for mere creature comforts, not but what the hundreds of tiny pillows and cushions we had collected have proved of inestimable value. Only I begin to fear they may not last out because our stock is rapidly dwindling. Thomas Ashby¹ pays us weekly visits and does his best to replenish our various stores. We call him Barbarossa because of his ginger beard, but he is no less a person than the Director of the British School of Art and Archæology in Rome. He is now temporarily attached to the British Red Cross Hospital at Villa Trento.

The heat continues to be intense and the nights are scarcely less hot than the days. Many men are lifted out of the ambulances with more than half their dirty blood-soaked uniform cut right away, and some are strangely distressing cases. Yesterday, after midnight, one man arrived stark naked, his poor head and face tied up in bandages, his senses gone. He threw off the military cape we tried to wrap round him and moved through the shed moaning and restless and most miserable. The jaw had been partly shot away so that it was not possible to feed him or to do anything but give a strong morphia injection. As soon as the morphia began to take effect, we persuaded him to lie down on one of the stretchers, and covered him with a light blanket. He lay shuddering and plucking at it and muttering "*Lenzuolo, lenzuolo*,"² and at long last grew silent. I hope never again to see anything so macabre and appalling. In the shed the long dark shadows from the oil lamp half lit the haggard horrified faces of the men—while in the midst this strange naked

¹ Dr. Thomas Ashby, the distinguished archæologist, died in June 1931, under tragic circumstances travelling from Southampton to London. His valuable library, originally intended to be left to the Vatican, has been acquired by the British School of Art and Archæology in Rome.

² "A sheet, a sheet."

figure shuffled up and down, uncovered everywhere except for a dusty, soaked, red bandage wound about his head and face. Ceaselessly following him, all round the shed, were hundreds of hollow bloodshot eyes—just staring, helpless, hopeless and aghast.

To-day some inspectors came, which is surely the blessed intervention of Providence. Better arrangements are to be made. Capitano Aguglia is to come down to us and will in future be here as *comandante* and his hospital for convalescents at Craoretto will be closed.

We hear the troops have made good progress, Monte Frate taken and beyond, but the men complain of the hardships endured and of the lack of food.

On closer acquaintance I find my yoke-fellow, A. B., not easy to work with. She is a splendid cook and a tireless, indefatigable worker, but she is exasperatingly deaf, and although I am nominally *comandante* she will not tolerate anything that borders on suggestion, let alone criticism. She accumulates all kinds of souvenirs from the Austrian wounded. Helmets, water-bottles, gas-masks, an eagle-clasped leather belt, an iron cross. . . . To me this collecting mania seems all wrong, yet it would be unwise to say anything that might upset her (more particularly as it would have to be shouted).

At Casa Rossa we are in difficulties about the water supply. Last night our pump was stolen from the back-yard. The raid was executed by two lieutenants belonging to a platoon that had been billeted in Casa Rossa before we came. Apparently they themselves had procured the pump, fixed it up in the yard, and, perhaps, not without reason, regarded it as their own property. However, for us the result of its removal was a water famine. I was, therefore, compelled to lodge a complaint at Headquarters with the result that a few hours later the pump was brought back—elaborately BROKEN. Our predecessors had also set up two rows of hutches at the back of the yard in which they still keep rabbits (for eating) and hens. To these they have now added two old and extremely vocal cocks. They crow incontinently, not only at dawn but for hours before and after, so that the night shift, returning at 4 a.m., cannot get any sleep.

August 22nd.

There was a tremendous report from the explosion of a mine at 2 a.m. last night, followed by prolonged but distant bombard-

ment. Things are apparently going well, and the Austrians have been cleared from the summit of Monte Santo. Monte Gabriele is invested. The Third Army (Duke of Aosta) is said to be doing well down towards the sea, but we hardly ever get a newspaper and one never knows for certain what is happening. . . .

Later.

This has been a distressing afternoon. An ambulance with six stretcher cases was overturned just at the entrance to the camp. I was at work in the surgical shed when the cases were brought in. Two were *in extremis*, a third, over and above war wounds, had a dislocated shoulder. The haphazard system that prevails, of using everyone, including chauffeurs, as though they were "supermen" leads to these quite avoidable accidents. Antonio, the chauffeur, is normally a steady good driver, but after three days and three nights of incessant work he no longer knows or cares what he is doing. Somehow, although we have a new *comandante*, it has been an exceptionally bad day. Inside another fully laden ambulance, labelled *Proseguire*,¹ I found one man dead already and another trembling so violently that all the shelves with their wounded on his side of the ambulance were shaking. With some difficulty I got permission to have these two taken out for the sake of the four remaining. It is strangely difficult to get the medical officers to do anything. Are they deficient in human sympathy or just despairing fatalists? "*Cosa vuole?*" they say, "*la guerra e' una cosa orrenda.*"²

August 23rd.

Received instructions this morning that I was to give whole time to the surgeons' shed, but no sooner had I started to assist the surgeons with dressings than I was fetched away and taken back to the sorting shed to administer anti-tetanus injections. At certain hours the numbers in the sorting shed are so large that two of us are none too many for maintaining some semblance of order and I feel that, filthy, stinking, stifling as it is, I am really most needed there. One of our team is off duty with a bad septic throat, but fortunately another V.A.D., who speaks fluent Italian, has arrived from Villa Trento to take her place. Doctor Aguglia is very insistent about the necessity of

¹ To proceed.

² "What do you expect? War is a horrible thing."

our using frequently a potent and pestilent gargle that he has made up for us himself.

August 24th.

On duty all last night. The stream of sick and wounded has swollen to a flood, and there is so much congestion round the huts that half the ambulances are now unloaded at the farther extremity of the camp. This doubles the distance we have to carry things, and to add to these complications there is no moon. Why one of us does not break a limb hurrying and scrambling in the darkness up and down banks and over dykes I cannot think. Fortunately the *piantoni* are acrobatic and indefatigable. They carry the heaviest things and pull us across the ditches.

Together with many captured guns, four thousand Austrians passed through last night to be interned behind barbed and electrocized wire at Cividale. Some are very young, some looked like Montenegrins, some like flat-faced Kalmucks—all were slouching along in a ragged tired way. But they seemed in good spirits and were laughing and singing in snatches.

We hear that our Divisional General, Novello, has been *stollenbosched*. Whether from his conduct (or misconduct) of the recent court martial, whether something to do with Operations, or because of irregularities behind the lines, it is idle to speculate.

August 25th.

To-day was marked by a *sosta*.¹ Numbers fell from one thousand one hundred and seventy-five yesterday to six hundred and three to-day. But there is a great deal of heavy firing going on and we hear that a fresh offensive towards Tolmino is in progress.

As a result of there being no freshly wounded, sad desperate cases came through this afternoon. Cases that had previously been left on one side as hopeless. The drivers say "*non valgono il prezzo della benzina*".² But being still alive to-day they are sent down so that the ambulances may have their load. . . . Many empty *camions* have passed up with a noise like thunder, and we learn that the *sanità* is at last moving forward.

August 27th.

At mid-day we were startled by the reverberating echo of several consecutive and tremendous explosions. Every fantastic

¹ Halt or pause.

² "They are not worth the price of the petrol."

conjecture circulated, but the facts were only disclosed at dusk. The explosions were the destruction, probably due to sabotage, of large Italian munition dumps at Udine.

A. B. and another girl (both of which I have transferred to night work) were, after some hours of morning sleep, taken into Udine by Dr. Thomas Ashby in his little Red Cross car. They returned late, but in time for their night duty, and said that the *carabinieri* had closed half the streets, that all the windows in the town were smashed, and that the hospitals, already full of wounded, are now overflowing with the victims of this fresh disaster . . . for us an inconvenient consequence of the explosion is that we can no longer evacuate either to Udine or to S. Giovanni di Manzano.

August 28th.

To-day as a result of the explosions and the impossibility of further evacuation to Udine, there is intolerable congestion in the *smistamento*. Added to this, and as was sure to happen when it was most inconvenient, there arrived, for the first time, visitors. First came Colonel Delmé-Radcliffe. He is an able man, handicapped by lack of tact, and an unfortunate manner. These shortcomings make him unpopular, but I like him because to me he has been kind and helpful.

Later came two French officers belonging to the Aviation Mission that is quartered at the Lido, but there was nothing to divert them and they soon left.

Experience has taught that the ambulance drivers are the only people worth talking to about the position at the Front. From them I gather that owing to the absence of any real roads in the mountains there is great congestion, and that there are many places where the up-going *camions* and down-coming ambulances cannot cross each other. This leads, of course, to long delays ; also some of the ambulances with wounded have had to be entirely abandoned in order that the *camions* carrying ammunition, victuals and water for the Army in the field may pass up. A complete break-down of the *commissariat* has been holding up the advance and only the capture of an Austrian food depôt has enabled the troops to hold on to the positions so hardly and gallantly gained.

August 30th.

The numbers coming through the *smistamento* are now rapidly decreasing. Yesterday we had six hundred and fifty-nine only.

We are quite skilful at managing these numbers now, and if the stream goes on dwindling I shall try and get back soon to Venice. I have been very unwell the last ten days although resolution, re-enforced by Easton's syrup and other remedies, has enabled me to remain at work. Still, this camp is neither a "picnic" nor a health resort. All water and milk are boiled but an unimaginable thick, black, moving crust of large, biting flies settles on all food the instant it is uncovered and infection cannot be avoided. Colonel Radcliffe was appalled by the flies in our little dining-room. He is sending down wire netting and a man to fix it over the Casa Rossa windows, but as all the rooms are now swarming with flies, wire in the windows will not be of much use unless to prevent them from getting out.

August 31st.

To-day, when compassion had grown cold, and I began to feel as mechanical and metallic as the patched-up pump in our back-yard, an unexpected incident galvanized me once more into activity.

From out of a *camion*, closely packed with lightly wounded, a tall gaunt figure was led like a child into our shed. In spite of helplessness there was about him the indefinable air of a leader. The head was closely bandaged and the upper part of the face concealed. On the field-card attached to his shoulder was written "Complete lesion of both eyes".

Of our little group, I alone was on duty, and therefore able to lead him to a relatively quiet corner of the shed; the one in which we keep our stores, and where we have one chair and a table. He asked for black coffee, soap (an unprecedented request) and later for a post card. He explained that he wished to write a few words to his wife himself, fearing that news, written in a strange hand, would alarm her. It is not often that one sees tragic misfortune borne with self-forgetfulness in the first hours of shock and pain, and my whole heart went out to him in compassion and wonder. Nor did his blindness dull the swift understanding and confidence that passed like a live wire between us and lasted all the hours he was in camp. In spite of pain and loss of sight, he insisted on writing something on the post card himself. What he wrote was indecipherable and without saying anything I was about to supplement a few words of my own so as to make the message intelligible,

when a rough soldier blurted out, "No one can read that". These unlucky words broke down his self-control, but later I persuaded him to let me write something at his dictation, and he then dictated this: "*Carissima, Ieri andando a l'assalto con i miei fanti, fui ferito leggermente alla faccia da palottola esplosive. Guariro presto Spero farmi trasferire a Roma.*"¹

This he was able to sign, forming the letters very slowly while I guided his hand. Then he added wearily: "It all happened yesterday about 6 p.m." The regiment had been told to take some position on the Bainsizza. He asked if we had the latest news of the attack and wanted to know if it had been successful, so I read aloud the daily *Bolettino* we receive here, but from his silence I do not think the account bore much resemblance to what had really happened. After this, I induced him to swallow some strong beef-tea and then led him across the camp to lie down and rest in the officers' *baracca* until some conveyance should be available.

The Commandant was very hard to persuade but at last he consented to send direct to Udine, the only place where there is an eye hospital. In the ordinary way the ambulance would have had to take the routine route which describes a long circle by Cormons. I knew that every hour that passed without anything being done diminished the chance of saving the eyes, but if only they could be operated on quickly some measure of sight might be preserved. While stumbling slowly into the *camion* he asked my name. At that moment and in that place my name seemed far away and rather absurd, and I answered "Soeur Hélène"—nor did I trouble him to contrive to let me hear how he got on. . . . Yet the manner and bearing—the courage and self-forgetfulness of this unknown Roman, remain and will long remain an inspiring memory.

In Italy officers receive much more attention than *Uomini di Truppa*. On the British front in France the treatment meted out at a clearing station to officers and men is practically identical. Memory brings back to me now that a keen observer of human nature—a Russian—once said: "You English are not better than other people, but you are much more civilized." Perhaps this explains the uniformity of treatment.

¹ "Most dear. Yesterday when attacking with my men I was wounded lightly in the face by an explosive bullet. I shall soon be well. I hope to get myself transferred to Rome."

September 3rd.

The ambulance drivers say that large gangs of workmen are being employed farther up, transforming mule-tracks into roads, and that until this is done the guns cannot be moved forward into fresh positions. The numbers passing daily through Dolegna are now quite small.

BOMBS AND DÉFAITISME IN VENICE

At the end of August and beginning of September there took place the struggle for San Gabriele. Owing to the gallantry of the attacking troops, that continued to advance up the precipitous mountain-side in spite of devastating fire from above, the Italians actually reached the summit on September 4th. After contesting this fiercely for about ten days, the opposing armies divided the position between them.

September 4th.

Last night was one of incessant artillery fire. S. Gabriele is said to have been taken this morning at 6 a.m. but the wounded are to be evacuated by another route. It is rumoured that S. Daniele also has been taken but this seems improbable.

Sickness can no longer be defied and I quit the camp on Thursday. Mrs. Watkins will leave the Soldiers' Convalescent Home and come down to take my place at Casa Rossa so that the V.A.D. girls will not be left alone.

The following are official figures, given me on leaving Dolegna, by the *maggiore* in command of the clearing station.

1. Dolegna was the clearing station for the Second Army engaged August–September 1917 in the struggle for Monte Santo and S. Gabriele.
2. The number of wounded passing through Dolegna during the first twelve days was 12,065, of which 293 were officers.
3. The largest number that passed through in any twenty-four hours was on August 24th–25th—1,128.
4. The total number of Austrian prisoners that were marched past was 4,000.

Thinking over this Italian experience I cannot help comparing it—and comparing the men—with those amongst whom war and a measure of good fortune have thrown me in France and England. Comparisons are proverbially odious, and yet it is not without interest to recall points of difference between Italian soldiers and those of other nations. Humour, that seldom forsakes an Englishman and keeps his heart merry through the roughest day, is lacking in the Italian, but of frank cheerfulness there is much, and of dumb patience under wretched conditions

an almost inexhaustible store. On the other hand, credulity is a disastrous Italian characteristic. An alarming report, an insidious rumour is instantly accepted, magnified and implicitly believed. The Englishman, beneath an apparently dull exterior, veils a shrewder sense of inherent probabilities and is less ripe a prey to propaganda.

The majority of Italian wounded were remarkably free from "nerves". Those not in acute pain worried very little about their wounds or their ultimate destination; they were frankly glad to leave the front and indifferent to conditions of dirt and discomfort that would have aggravated the distress of an Englishman or even of a less fastidious *poilu*. Those whose condition was grave or who were very suffering were child-like and appealing, and phenomenally grateful for what little comfort rough first-aid skill could bring.

For many days and weeks Italians will continue to march and fight upon quite inadequate food and sleep, but when exhaustion once gets the upper hand it paralyses their will no less than their limbs, and it then becomes impossible to extract one ounce of further effort from a man "fought out". The effects of exhaustion are, of course, more or less the same upon all nationalities; it is only the latent capacity for a final effort that varies—but there is one characteristic I have never met except amongst Italian soldiers. Beneath their rough unsophisticated exterior lie concealed a sense of beauty, a responsiveness, a rich endowment of imagination that will suddenly flash out and illuminate war and waste and human wretchedness with singular vividness of thought and of expression. North of the Alps poetry and eloquence form no part of the fighting man's equipment. These exotics, springing like wild flowers on the Golgotha of a casualty clearing station, never failed to revive and to quicken one who was privileged to pass strenuous days in their midst.

VENICE.

CANAL GRANDE

PALAZZO GUISTINIAN.

September 7th, Friday.

I arrived back in Venice last night. The journey was made in the company of "Sister Mary Joseph" (Maria Guiseppa) who was returning to her convent at Florence, and we were fetched from Dolegna in Colonel Delmé-Radcliffe's car. We went round by Versa to see the improvements made in the

English Military Hospital. It all looked promising; many changes undertaken if nothing quite complete. Last June what I saw in this hospital was most distressing. I wrote to Sir Arthur Stanley, Chairman of the British Red Cross, saying that nursing sisters must be sent out and that other changes should be made. There was a careless casual medical officer, no nurses, and everything in the hospital at sixes and sevens. Arthur Stanley reported to Sir Arthur Keogh and the result of all this "barging in" is perhaps its justification. To-day there were about two hundred cases in hospital, mostly medical (typhoid, dysentery, pneumonia), but everything appeared well ordered and arranged and the matron seemed to be a good organizer, broad-minded and kind. The medical officer had been superseded.

I reached Venice late, unpacked wearily and went to bed thinking to rest at long last in my lovely frescoed, silent bedroom for at least twenty-four hours. But at 1 a.m. the screech of the steam siren gave an alarm and was followed almost instantaneously by the longest, noisiest, most nerve-racking raid that Venice has yet endured. The defence now employs fairly powerful guns and certainly practises no economy of ammunition. On the roof of Palazzo Foscari next door (of which this *palazzo* once formed a part) a defensive *mitagliatrice* has been set up which for three hours continued to fire incessantly, and Palazzo Guistinian shuddered from the A.A. vibrations much more than from the enemy's bombs. These, as if by miracle, seem to have missed major historic buildings, although much minor damage has been done. One bomb exploded at S. Gallo just behind the Procuratie Vecchie, carrying away a corner of the Banca di Napoli together with its little bridge; others fell close to S. Giovanni Crisostomo, another hard by the Rialto, one at the Pescheria. One exploded on the Dominican Suore Convent at S. Casciano—one on the new prison under construction at Santa Marta, one on the *ospedale* for *rachitici* at the Lista di Spagna—at S. Pietro di Castello, three at the arsenal (but one never knows the extent of the damage done there), and last of all a *bomba morta* crashed through Palazzo Morosini from roof to *pian-terreno*. Fortunately Annina Morosini is away and also the English family who rent the top floor. Annina only left last week for Como and Livorno. She has always been more apprehensive than anyone about bombs and this is the fulfilment of her worst fears. No one in the *palazzo* was injured, but her expectations have been realized, and some day, I fancy, in her

theatrical way, memorial slabs engraved "Annina Morosini" and surmounted by egregiously "outsize" ducal caps and crowns will be inserted on every floor traversed by the bomba.

September 9th.

One chronicles a raid like that of two nights ago, almost as though it were an ordinary occurrence, and, indeed, this summer raids have been neither few nor far between. But these visitations leave one very tired, and after the wakeful hours that followed my long journey I collapsed in a condition bordering on coma. To-day I begin to live again and feel so grateful to my dear old cook and caretaker, Guiseppina, who though quaking with fear (like all Venetians) yet twice compelled her trembling knees upstairs because she did not think it good for me to be alone.

But I like to be alone in these vast historic spaces.¹ "*Ils en ont vu bien d'autres*", though never anything quite like bombing from the air. When I arrived in May and first experienced a Venice raid, I descended in the orthodox manner, to my gondolier's crypt-like room on the water level of the Grand Canal. I found there already my Pina and Maria and also, from Count Sernagiotto's top floor, his two old witches, Santa and Beppina. All four were crouched on their knees, fingering rosaries and muttering Ave Marias, round a small church candle, stuck into a biscuit box. Every chink and cranny of light and air had been excluded, but they seemed quite unconscious of the stifling heat. The scene recalled one of those weird Goya pictures that I remember studying long ago, in the basement of the Prado in Madrid. According to one's temperament one might have smiled or sneered, or felt melodramatic. I was only acutely conscious that being with them made me feel very uncomfortable. So ever since, when there is a raid, I just remain upstairs and they go down below. The next day they look jaundiced and are extremely irritable. Probably I am the same though perhaps less vocal and demonstrative.

It was pathetic the other night to see the little Pompiere launch come feebly hooting down the canal in order to try and extinguish a fire caused by a bomb at S. Vio. The moonlight has been incredibly bright and beautiful and it is always when

¹ Henry III, on his flight from Poland to be crowned King of France, was lodged, together with his suite, in Palazzo Guistinian and Palazzo Foscari, which at that time formed one palace.

there is a full moon that the raids take place. When the launch passed in front of the windows I observed that it carefully hugged the dark shadows thrown by Palazzo Morolin upon the still water on the opposite side of the canal. I then realized that this side is very conspicuous with the moon shining full upon its vast Gothic palaces and reflecting their huge glass casements in the canal. Perhaps the guns on Palazzo Foscari are also conspicuous? In any case we have escaped aerial attention, although bombs dropped at the Rialto and S. Polo sounded as if in the next *calle*.

This morning Mrs. Eden, who though an octagenarian is one of the few residents sufficiently spirited to remain in Venice, has written me a charming and sympathetic letter.

September 10th.

The weather is divine and it is much cooler than when I was here six weeks ago. I begin to feel stronger and went to-day in the gondola to the Lido and had luncheon with Alix Cavaliere. On the Lido sands, that only four years since were closely packed with cosmopolitan bathers, there are not now six people. I think I will appropriate one of the abandoned *capanne* and start swimming and sun bathing again.

The *Bolettino* continues to give fairly good news but nothing very definite about S. Gabriele. The bulk of the fighting is still north of Gorizia and it would seem that the Second Army will evacuate its casualties farther to the east.

When strolling past Palazzo Morosini to-day, I followed a crowd of sightseers who were pressing inside the wide open door. The *custode's* daughter (who has turned saffron colour) asked me to come upstairs and see the damage. It consists of a large hole driven through three unusually solid marble floors. Incurably a fatalist, I have kept my apartment, and all the treasures collected in it, arranged exactly as in former years. But Annina, anxious and full of precautions, had stacked all her pictures, furniture, plate and china in the middle of the *mexicanino* floor. Had the long *sala* been left clear in the centre, as in former years, no damage beyond a hole two metres square would have been done. But as it is all the china and lovely old *rococo* chairs and long seats from the ballroom are in fragments and saffron-coloured acid, from the bomb, is splashed over the pictures and indeed over everything. The *custode* and all his family are stained a deep ochre, and like Lady Macbeth,

though the bomb fell three days since, they cannot be washed clean. Annina has sent no answer to the *custode's faire part* telegram.

There have been serious riots in Turin engineered by German Propaganda Agents and connived at, it is said, by Giolitti. Horatio Brown¹ has returned from Vallombrosa, indignant and miserable at the *défaitiste* atmosphere in Tuscany. He has been writing verses, because, so he says, the difficulty of rhyming in Italian takes his mind off the war. He gave me these verses :

A se Stesso

Quando vecchio sarai, non ancora spento
Verranno a consolarti ricordando,
Lo splendido tuo inutile passato,
La giovanil baldanza.
Che fece, e poi disfecca la speranza.
Allor risponderai, pella tua ambascia,
Deh !—non turbar l'indegno mio riposo
Coll infantil fanfara della tromba.
Cessa, e mi lascia
Al taciturno oblio della Tomba.

H. F. B., 1917.

Arthur Spender has now returned to Venice. It appears that a *bomba morta* falling on Palazzo Pisani crashed into his lovely *sei cento* apartment—indeed, it was indiscreet enough to drop into his bedroom, and the calamity has brought him back from Salsomaggiore. A shell also exploded in the garden at S. Vio at the back of the Marchesa Casati's apartment. The big palm is uprooted and all the windows on the garden side are broken. However, she is resigning her lease, or rather, as the rent is never paid, the proprietor is resigning her. The *Nuits Vénitiennes* and all the extravagances of 1913 have passed into Limbo—and not one of the gay, gallant, English group that took so prominent a part in them, survives the war. Raymond Asquith, Charles Lister, Lord Vernon, Ego Charteris, Billy Grenfell, Edward Horner—"All, all are gone . . . The *young* familiar faces."

After the struggle for San Gabriele there was a lull in the fighting until October. Though the Italians had gained a little ground the offensive had not succeeded, and on the night of October 23rd-24th the Austrian counter-offensive was launched. Now, however, the Austrians were opposed by an army very different from that with which they had previously had to

¹ Horatio Brown, Litt.D., author of *Studies in Venetian History*, also translator of Molmenti's *History of Venice* (J. Murray, 1907).

deal. Discontent at the meagre success obtained had been intensified by defeatist propaganda and by the dread of passing another winter in the open where in previous years little had been done for the comfort and nothing for the amusement and recreation of the men. Many of them obtained leave only at long intervals and for short periods. In addition to this, those in the front line had to suffer all the hardship of mountain warfare, in which they had frequently to attack an enemy posted in what seemed to be impregnable rocky strongholds.

Everything had united to lower the morale of the troops, and for Italy the result was disastrous. At Caporetto the line melted away, and by the end of the year the Italians could do no more than hold the line of the Piave.

The Austrians remained for a whole year on the Piave (the combined British and Italian advance commenced precisely one year later, on October 24th, 1918). The enemy front extended right down to the sea, and at one point at San Donà, a portion of the army was across the Piave, camping in low marshy ground, some distance to the south of the river. As the crow flies, they were within ten miles of Venice.

A few weeks later letters from friends on the Italian front hinted, in veiled language, at increasing *défaitisme* and disaffection, and I decided to leave Venice. The retreat from Caporetto followed on October 23rd-24th, 1917 (when a large part of the Venetian population was transferred to towns farther south). Before deciding to quit Venice I had consulted the British Consul on the spot besides receiving telegrams from the Foreign Office in London. Everything served to confirm the fear that Venice was destined to fall once again, a prey to the hated Austrians. Had this happened, all the treasures collected through fifteen years of endeavour to revive in Palazzo Guistinian the very specialized beauty of seventeenth-century Venice would have been irrevocably lost.¹

It was indeed a miracle that the advance came to a standstill and that the sea-queen city was spared the horrors of occupation and pillage.

All this time my faithful Guiseppina refused to forsake Palazzo Guistinian. Indeed, she was amongst the very few who had the pluck to remain when Austrian guns were within a few miles of open undefended Venice, D'Annunzio's "*Città anadyomene*" of "the marble arms and the thousand emerald girdles. . . ."

¹ See Appendix III.

CHAPTER V

1918

VIC-SUR-AISNE, PARIS AND THE ARMISTICE

In the spring of 1918 Ludendorff decided to stake everything on a final bid for victory, and on March 21st the great offensive began. The Allied lines from Arras to Rheims were forced right back, and the Germans advanced to within a few miles of Amiens and to within forty miles of Paris. Though the Germans held their gains for some time, by July their attack had lost its impetus. On July 18th the initiative had passed to the Allies and their advance only terminated with the signing of the Armistice on November 11th.

The summer of 1918 was the first I had spent in England since the War. On Whit-Monday, May 20th, we staged a very successful Tudor Pageant and Fun Fair at Esher Place. It was an unusually hot day and the crowds that came from London exceeded expectation. Exhausted East-enders seated themselves in scores on the top of old yew hedges, somewhat to their discomfort and greatly to my distress, since years of gradual growth were broken down in one afternoon. However, the sum realized did much to compensate for the work and trouble that organizing the Fête had entailed, and I was able to contribute the surprising profit of £1,136 6s. 10d. to the British Red Cross.

Early in September I again applied to Vicomtesse de la Panouse (President of the Croix Rouge Française) for employment near the front, and was offered work as assistant anæsthetist to Mademoiselle Saint-Paul's *Ambulance* attached to General Mangin's Army.

I left England in mid-September, travelling direct to Vic-sur-Aisne.

AMBULANCE ST. PAUL. VIC-SUR-AISNE

October 2nd, 1918.

This *Ambulance* (the French expression for a small field hospital) is attached to General Mangin's army and is named after Mademoiselle Saint-Paul, who has run it uninterruptedly since August 1914.

Though I have spent much of the last three years living in

foreign war hospitals, I have never experienced anything like such harsh conditions as those prevailing here. On arrival a damp bed had indeed been allotted to me but absolutely nothing else, not even a biscuit, though I arrived late at night after an interminable journey. The nurses' beds are in a loft under a leaking roof, and the loft is alive with rats. It has already three occupants besides myself. We perform our ablutions simultaneously in four buckets of cold water, and there is no retreat nearer or less elementary than a primitive hut at the remoter end of a dripping orchard.

Nominally this *Ambulance* accommodates a hundred and fifty, but mattresses are now being brought in from anywhere in order to make up extra beds.

The system, so far as one can see, is to have two *équipes*. This means two sets of surgeons with their respective assistants for operations and dressings. Under normal conditions these *équipes* are on duty alternately for a fortnight, but in times of stress like the present an *équipe* stays at its post uninterruptedly for twenty-four hours and then rests for twenty-four hours before coming on duty again. Motor-ambulances bring in the wounded mostly at night.

An anæsthetist is attached to each *équipe* and it was to give anæsthetics that I came out, but I find there is ample opportunity for additional work in a tent that has been set up on a sunk lawn outside the Château. Forty-five beds have been squeezed into its narrow space and we are four women to divide night and day-shifts as best we can. *Poilus* do most of the heavy work ; but as they themselves are still on the convalescent list, they are called *infirmiers* although untrained. They are continually changing as one or the other is passed sound enough, by the Medical Staff, to be drafted back to a nearby *dépôt* before returning to the Front. They are quick and handy but not easy to work with, because they will do things at their own time and in their own way. When the dinner-bell rings, whatever the emergency, no power on earth will induce them to linger one extra minute, or to lend a hand.

In the tent we nurses are two English girls and myself, besides a dear old French lady. We wear old riding-boots and water-proof leggings because the clay soil under the tent is indescribably damp, cold and penetrating. The men, warmed by blankets and hot-water bottles, do not seem to feel the cold. Coming from the trenches they are thankful enough to be here. Everything



H. D'Almeida
1915-1918

Photo: Val L'Estrange

An Anaesthetist in the first World War

in this world is relative. To me this damp, raw, insinuating cold suggests the icy circle of a new kind of Inferno.

(The subsequent entries were made in Paris)

November 9th.

For three weeks after the above was written work increased and fatigue was intensified by the great discomfort in which we lived. It became difficult to get more than two or three hours consecutive sleep, and quite impossible to write. Eventually the Saint-Paul *Ambulance* received orders to evacuate its wounded, to pack itself up and prepare to follow General Mangin to the Rhine. I have a scrap of paper that he subsequently wrote me :

*"En profonde reconnaissance pour les soins dévoués donnés a mes blessés sur L'Aisne."*¹

"MANGIN."

When the news of the impending evacuation flew round the wards it was distressing to see the look of dismay on many of the men's faces. They were far too intelligent not to realize their unfitness for even a few hours knock-about transit to fresh quarters.

An unhappy incident occurred in the case of a prisoner, the only German in our tent, still fully conscious though paralysed and fast dying from a serious injury to the spine. He had managed to procure, from one of the *infirmiers*, a few miserable chrysanthemums to give Mademoiselle Saint-Paul as a thank-offering, when she should pass through the tent to take leave of the men. She came very late but found time to pause a few minutes at a *poilu's* bed next to his own. As she turned to leave, he lifted his head and tried to say a few words in broken French and held out his poor little bunch of flowers. Mademoiselle Saint-Paul passed icily, stonily, on. She would not touch the flowers, she would not even look at him. It was a direct uncompromising affront which those who stood by could in no way attenuate or efface.

Later she summoned us nurses to her room to say farewell, and alluded to what had passed. Speaking vehemently, and with concentrated passion, she said : "How dared he offer me flowers torn from the soil of France which he and his people '*ont envahi*,

¹ The autograph of the above is inserted in the little case-book that I kept while in the war zones. It is now deposited in the War Museum.

dévasté et arrosé de notre sang''! It had been just one of those moments, more tense in war, but which happen in everyday life, when there is so much to be said on either side. To me, standing on French soil but unable to see with French eyes, it seemed that towards one already on the threshold of outer darkness and so completely alone, some gentleness and compassion might have been shown.

With the Armistice imminent, and the expectation of it on every tongue, I decided not to accompany the *Ambulance* to the Rhine, where it continued, for some months, to do good and much-needed work for the sick and wounded prisoners who were being gradually brought back from Switzerland and Germany.

Mademoiselle Saint-Paul's spirit, sacrifices and untiring devotion to her countrymen were subsequently recognized by an award of the Legion of Honour. I returned to Paris.

HÔTEL VOUILLEMONT,
Paris.

After four years of war, creature comforts cannot be despised, and it is a joy to be once more living in an hotel in Paris, even though it is under-staffed and less than half-heated.

To-day I had luncheon with Lord Derby at the Embassy, meeting the Curzons and a few others (George Curzon is now President of the Council and a member of the War Cabinet). He came in late from an interview with the King of the Belgians who is here in connection with the Peace Terms. King Albert urges that the Peace Conference should be in Brussels, but obviously it will and must be here. Amongst other guests were the Lyttons, who have arrived on some propaganda mission emanating from Lord Beaverbrook. There were also General Du Cane¹ and Sir David Henderson, who is acting as a kind of superior military *attaché*. Conversation ran entirely upon the impending Armistice. Lord Derby, who is in close touch with Clémenceau, is convinced that the Germans will subscribe to any terms. Two small points will probably be conceded: the most important one is about increasing the number of divisions the Germans are to be allowed to retain in order to maintain order in Germany.

Grace Curzon rather handicapped conversation by a series of

¹ Gen. Sir John Du Cane, G.C.B., was chief of the British Staff to Marshal Foch and later G.O.C. British Army of the Rhine 1924-7.

irrelevant remarks, but she has a lovely delicate Dresden china face and her influence with George is considerable.

After luncheon I had a *tête-à-tête* talk with Lord Derby and was indiscreet enough to hint that it seemed strange that General Haig should not be present at Compiègne for the dictation of the Armistice terms. He seemed to feel that Haig ought to be there, but from his manner I do not think he has pressed for it.

In the afternoon I strolled across the Place de la Concorde and up to the Arc de Triomphe. Both sides of the Champs Elysées were lined with *obusiers* captured by Mangin's Tenth Army. Nearly all were camouflaged with the most diverse colours and patterns and everyone contemplating these menacing and hideous objects looked happy and *rayonnant*.

HÔTEL VOUILLEMENT.

Monday, November 11th, 1918.

At 10 a.m. the proprietor of the hotel came to my room and told me that the Articles of the Armistice had been actually signed. After a few overwhelming moments the joy of the *fait accompli* drew me from my room into the street. People had not yet heard the news, but every face was smiling and hopeful. I secured, in a little shop, an English cockade, but the French colours were already sold out, so I went on to the Printemps and bought a piece of tricolor ribbon to tie round the cockade and pinned them together on to my coat. As I left the Printemps the first Victory gun was fired. At once every man, woman and child rushed out into the streets which soon became impassable and completely blocked; American cars and gay little *midinettes* being much in evidence.

Later in the day I was starting to saunter round the corner to the Embassy when Marquise (Corise) de Noailles arrived in her tiny car to fetch me. French flags were tied all over it, and a *croix de guerre* adolescent *classe dix-huit*, was on one step, and an intoxicated Belgian on the other. They insisted on handshakes and accolades and only after much delay could they be induced to start the engine and allow us to move off. When we turned into the Faubourg St. Honoré the crowd pressing towards the Embassy was so great that Lord Derby's car, which was coming out of the courtyard to take him to the Chamber of Deputies, could hardly move, so Corise put me down and escaped by a side-street, arranging to call for me to-night at 10 p.m.

and promising an escort of *cavaliers*, so that we may patrol the Boulevards and take part in popular rejoicings.

I pressed on towards the Embassy just as Lord Derby's car jerked forward only to be stopped and cheered by the dense crowd before jerking forward again, while an hysterical Englishwoman, her head wreathed in an *infirmière's* veil, clambered on to the roof of a taxi-cab and yelled out "Rule Britannia". The crowd was so great that it was some minutes before I could squeeze through the few yards that separated me from the gates of the Embassy. In the courtyard were Grace Curzon, Victoria Primrose,¹ the two young Rothschild *belle-sœurs*, Sir David Henderson, Charlie Montagu and two men in khaki (unidentified). As it was impossible to pierce the crowd on the Faubourg side we went back into the Embassy and out, through the garden, on the other side to the Avenue Gabriel. The Alsace statue in the Place de la Concorde was completely hidden with French flags and the crowd grew denser every minute, but we managed to get through and across the bridge leading to the *Chambre*. Once there, we struggled round to the back door (which is the only one the deputies ever use). Clémenceau had just passed in and was now making his speech. We were eager to see him and quite resigned to a long wait in the crowd outside. The doors into the *cour d'honneur* appeared to be hermetically closed, but presently a little tiny jib door (cut out of one of the larger doors) opened and let out a troop of *étudiants*, shouting "*On l'a vu. On l'a vu*", referring to Clémenceau. The police were forcibly ejecting them but not before they had picked up a little machine-gun and this they carried off with *force cris* and many loud "*reculez donc*" to us and to the assembled crowd. Just then I had the good luck to be recognized by General Berckheim, who was on guard at the gate on horseback (his wife is Madame de Pourtalès' ² eldest daughter), and, thanks to a few words from him, the sergeant passed us, in Indian file, through the little jib door into the courtyard. Here we identified Clémenceau's car standing in front of one or two others. We waited in comparative comfort for fully half an hour and then one or two *députés* came out, followed, soon after, by Clémenceau himself. Le Tigre

¹ Lady Victoria Primrose, daughter of the Ambassador, Lord Derby.

² The Marquise de Pourtalès had been a celebrated beauty under the Third Empire. She was a friend of my mother's who when in Paris had been invited by Louis Napoleon and the Empress Eugénie to visit Compiègne in her company.

looked incredibly fresh and vigorous for his seventy-eight years, short, square, alert, with bristling iron-grey hair and a white moustache. Victoria, who was, of course, well known to him, stepped forward and he shook hands with her and indeed with all of us, but I don't think he had the faintest idea who we all were, until the *belle-sœurs* described themselves as Baronnes de Rothschild (which was certainly informing). Inspired by their example, I ventured on "*amie de Violet Cecil*",¹ which transformed perfunctory greeting into friendly enquiries about Violet. He then sprang lightly into his little car, which stole unobtrusively away through another side door.

Shoving and pushing our way through good-humoured crowds, we returned on foot to the Embassy and partook of a very refreshing un-wartime tea. Grace Curzon lamented charmingly that though she had given up coming with us because of her "fittings" at Chanel's absolutely no one had stayed behind to attend to them!

Lord Derby, who had been in the *Chambre*, presently returned, looking less exuberantly cheerful than is his wont. It appears that after reading the terms of the Armistice, Clémenceau had said a few words about Alsace being restored to France and then had ended his speech with six emphatic words: "*La France a remporté la victoire.*" No mention of Britain's share in it, nor, indeed, of America, Belgium or of any of the other Allies.

Lord Derby has asked me to dine quietly at the Embassy again to-morrow.

In the evening Corise de Noailles came as arranged and we were joined by some other people and paraded the Boulevards and went to the popular music-hall "Olympia". Immense crowds were strolling about, but there was not much excitement. The evening seemed to me neither amusing nor agreeable—probably because I was too tired to enjoy it.

November 12th, 1918.

To-day all shops closed at mid-day and the crowds in the streets were denser than ever.

There is in the streets a complete and, because of its completeness, a conspicuous absence of British flags. Lord Derby

¹ Violet Maxse, married first Lord Edward Cecil, and secondly Viscount Milner, and is to-day editor of the *National Review*.

has arranged to have scores of them sent from London, but they cannot arrive for a day or two.

At the Embassy dinner this evening the other guests were the Curzons and Admiral George Hope. The absence of any recognition of the Allies' share in the War, either by Clémenceau or the Paris press, was much discussed. Not only Lord Derby, but the Belgian and American Ambassadors had gone down yesterday to the *Chambre*, expecting at the appropriate moment to step forward (possibly amidst perfunctory cheers) in order to bow their acknowledgments to the deputies. Mild courteous enthusiasm they thought would surely be aroused by some recognition of Allied Services from the lips of the President. *Mais il n'en était rien*. The French as individuals can be perfectly charming, but taken collectively they are undeniably a very peculiar, complacent, arrogant and self-centred people.

The Armistice terms came up again for discussion. Admiral Hope had been at Compiègne with Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss. The Germans are to be allowed forty divisions instead of twenty (as originally set out in the terms of the Armistice). This increase has been conceded in order to enable them to maintain some semblance of order in Germany. I hazarded a hesitating opinion that the Germans could only have signed the amazing Peace terms, feeling that at the present juncture, with their whole country seething with revolution, terms mattered very little and might be modified later. This unfortunate remark dropped damply into a well of silence. . . .

A report has been freely circulated in Paris to the effect that, at Compiègne, General Winterfeld wore the Legion of Honour—and French people have fastened upon it as "*infâme et le comble du mauvais goût*". Admiral Hope shattered the monstrous vision by quietly observing that Winterfeld did *not* wear the Legion of Honour. Hope has a reserved manner and a resolute expression. With regard to the Armistice terms, he said that he and Sir Rosslyn Wemyss had been in some doubt as to the number of submarines that should be handed over. The number originally fixed (I think he said 160) could not be given up because they are no longer in existence. The German Naval Officer Vanslow, affirmed that to-day there are 120 at the most.

Later, President Wilson was discussed, everyone saying something in his favour—mainly because he is commended by such competent yet curiously dissimilar judges as Arthur Balfour, Lord Reading, and Tardieu. All three like him and find him

not only sincere but "open to argument". Sweet reasonableness is always to opposite numbers an outstanding quality.

During dinner George Curzon read aloud a neatly worded note he had just received from Clémenceau, accepting an honour which George had offered him—the Oxford Honorary degree. Apparently George has also *already* offered it to President Wilson, for he declared with conviction that whether Wilson came over to Paris for the Peace Conference or not he would certainly come to Oxford to receive the degree! I find George Curzon's manner much changed since his return from India. He has become rather disconcertingly consequential, and what is more surprising he often appears to be mistaken (though very convinced) in the estimates he forms of men and affairs. Yet he may have been right when he said (dwelling on the absence in the Paris Press and in the Chamber of any acknowledgment of Allied co-operation during the war) that "It *does* matter because the Records of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Press are the only records that future generations will read and believe". It is curious how much the judgment of all politicians is affected by the importance they attach to Parliamentary verdicts.

Admiral Hope drew attention to a curious coincidence—that the Armistice came into being and was announced at 11 a.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month. Lord Derby said that nothing gave *him* more satisfaction than that Mons had been re-occupied immediately before the cessation of hostilities. "*Tout vient à temps à qui sait attendre.*" But I could wish that the Germans had been driven across the Rhine.

November 14th.

Small things indicate the improved conditions that the end of the War is bringing about. Already there appears at breakfast a slightly less exiguous portion of butter.

Lord Derby asked me to dine at the Embassy again last night. I fancy that he feels the undiluted presence of the Curzons somewhat of a strain and a characteristically Georgian incident in the afternoon had not thrown oil upon waters already somewhat disturbed.

During the brief absence of Lord Derby at the Elysée, Miss Decima Moore,¹ who runs very successfully a "Leave Club" for British soldiers (and who at one time was a not inconspicuous member of the lighter comedy stage), suddenly invaded the

¹ Afterwards Lady Moore-Guggisberg.

courtyard of the Embassy escorted by some hundreds of demonstrative Tommies. George, rising to the occasion and exhilarated by the unexpected opportunity for making a speech, pranced on to the top door-step and delivered, for no less than twenty minutes, an impassioned and moving address. Tableau: Return of Lord Derby just in time to witness an enthusiastic embrace bestowed upon George by Decima Moore to the accompaniment of "He's a jolly good fellow" sung in chorus by the Tommies (under the impression that George was nothing less than His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the victorious Republic). At this juncture, and as if the atmosphere were not already sufficiently charged with conflicting emotions, Grace Curzon sailed forward wreathed in smiles and said to Lord Derby: "I do *hope* you don't mind; I'm afraid George *has* been rather putting himself forward!"

At dinner, in addition to the Curzons, we again had the slim and observant Admiral Hope and a nice, though severely warcrippled, honorary *attaché*—Captain Malcolm Bullock.¹ The Curzons' plans have been changed a second time because the King of the Belgians has telegraphed that the State Entry into Brussels (which the Curzons have been invited to attend) has been put forward and will take place on Saturday instead of next week. Over and above trouble with the Germans, there is a rising wave of Socialism in Belgium and it is judged expedient to get the State Entry over at once. There was a great fuss going on with a secretary who was telephoning to get passes through the lines for the Curzons. Oddly enough it is our own G.H.Q. that is unwilling to give the passes.

There was no bridge after dinner but instead an animated discussion about the Prime Minister, Lloyd George. It appears that he is neither greatly liked, nor completely trusted, by any of his colleagues, and yet all recognize that he more than anyone in England, has been instrumental in winning the war. A remarkable gift of prophetic insight both as regards people and coming events made him invaluable in times of crisis, and early last Spring he was the first member of the War Cabinet to realize the urgent necessity for unity of command. Last night those who joined in the discussion thought that he was unreliable and congenitally incapable of following a straight line, but all admitted his readiness to shoulder responsibility and

¹ Captain Malcolm Bullock was soon after married to Lord Derby's daughter, Lady Victoria Primrose.

praised his great courage and dynamic driving power. It has been decided that the Coalition will support him at the General Election and this does away with any chance of an orthodox Liberal Opposition. It will leave the field open for the Labour Party in the New Parliament.

General Haig is greatly liked by Lord Derby, who says that his only mistake has been unwillingness to get rid of incompetent subordinates. (Rather a serious indictment in a Great War.)

There is an immense sense of relief in the air, and Paris these days is delightful, gilded as it is by the heavenly alchemy of autumn sunshine. The streets, although still abundantly *pavoisé*, begin to resume a normal aspect. The singing, surging crowds have been (ever since the Armistice) largely composed of *la jeunesse*. The greater part of the population has suffered too much to indulge in noisy demonstrations. The older people regard the Armistice as an unspeakable relief and that is about all. There is not even much conviction that the strained, unnatural way of living is definitely over. On every side are signs of disintegration and political upheaval, and it is not possible to feel at all confident that a millennium is in store. The next decade will have to deal drastically with reconstruction and economic adjustment and reform. Millions have died—many no doubt for that love of their own language and locality, their own people and their own customs which constitutes patriotism, but more, perhaps, after the *élan* of the first years, from indirect moral or physical compulsion. Some day everything may be revealed in its true perspective, but to-day the War appears as a cataclysm marked by very few redeeming features. At first many died for an ideal, later because of the necessity of “sticking it”. The next turn of the wheel will usher in Realists, Financiers, and adventurers who will devise new and probably quite fallacious remedies and expedients.

As for myself, now that the relief, excitement and exultation of the last weeks are at an end, I begin to realize that I am not merely tired but quite worn out. I would like to resign from being County Commissioner of Girl Guides, Vice-President of the Surrey branch of the Red Cross, etc., and be free from all the burdens and strains one has endeavoured so inadequately to shoulder during the last four years. I long for solitary, silent places—for leisure to rediscover Art and Beauty; and above all I long for warmth and for a winter passed beneath the quickening benediction of the sun.

November 17th, 1918.

To-day I had luncheon with Corise de Noailles, meeting her brother Louis René de Grammont. He seemed subdued and chastened, quite unlike the good-looking, rollicking scamp I remember meeting eight years ago when on a skating visit to St. Moritz. "*Il a été très bien pendant la guerre*," they say, a prodigy of courage and *élan* at Saint-Mihiel in 1915. His recompense is the much coveted *Fouragère* (*Chasseurs Alpins*), a *Légion d'Honneur* and numerous *Croix de Guerre* citations—the penalty, a shattered hand and shrunken arm.

My neighbour at luncheon was the editor of "*l'Intransigeant*". I failed to discover his name but found him very well informed about everything that is going on outside France as well as within it and altogether a pleasant and agreeable *causeur*.

The Noailles' huge house stands at a corner of the Champs Elysées and is completely blocked with furniture and pictures hastily brought from their château at Chantilly. The contents of the château were all evacuated in *camions* in the space of a few hours last June, when the German occupation of Chantilly seemed not only inevitable but imminent.

After luncheon, from the windows overlooking the Champs Elysées, we watched the Alsace-Lorraine procession. Hundreds and hundreds of people tramped unendingly past. The women wearing Alsatian dress looked picturesque and attractive—the *maires* and *préfets* less so. But no one was disposed to cavil and as these last slouched clumsily along, "*l'Intransigeant*" editor ejaculated not inappropriately, "*On dirait les Syndiques de Rembrandt*".

November 20th, 1918.

To-day I had luncheon with little Daisy de Broglie, meeting Diana Capel,¹ my old friend Princess Winnie de Polignac, the Academician Prince de Broglie and Count Isvolsky.² Isvolsky was interesting about Russia. He thinks the Emperor has certainly been murdered and most probably the whole Imperial family with him, although it is just possible that one or two of the young Grand Duchesses may have escaped. Everywhere and to everyone he urges the despatch of an Army of 300,000 men and

¹ Now Countess of Westmorland.

² Count Isvolsky had been Russian Ambassador in Paris until the collapse of the Imperial régime in 1917.

insists that it should be sent *at once* in order to disarm the Red Guard and the Bolsheviks and to put up in their place some reactionary form of Government. He is evidently exasperated by the douches of cold water showered upon the proposal by all in authority and notably by President Wilson. Indeed, how can France or the Allies (already bled white, and themselves threatened with disaffection in their armies) embark on such a colossal and quixotic task as the re-conquest of Russia at the present time?

November 22nd, 1918.

The King's visit is now announced for next Thursday and Alice Derby has at length come over and joined Lord Derby at the Embassy. Her "*grande dame*" presence, her tact and *savoir-faire* will be invaluable. She attended Thanksgiving Mass at Nôtre Dame last Tuesday when two children were crushed and trampled to death. Several ambassadors and special envoys never succeeded in getting into the cathedral at all, and were lucky to escape after the ceremony with their hats still on their heads and their clothes untorn. Apparently things could not have been worse arranged. It is believed that the crowds will be better handled and controlled for the King's visit next Thursday.

An interesting, unexpected visitor to-day was X.Y.Z., who all through the War has been in close touch with Cardinal Mercier. He said that in the critical early days of the War, Mercier's moral courage was astounding. At a time when Vatican silence seemed to tolerate and acquiesce in the rapine and massacres systematically organized and practised by the Germans; he preached everywhere, at the peril of his life, that not only religion but humanism and humanity itself were being outraged.

He said: "Why is it so soon forgotten that from Mercier's diocese alone 12,000 men were taken and deported like slaves to work in Germany?" Mercier records that exactly forty-nine of his village *curés* were executed in 1914. Subsequently he admitted that the persecution of the priests diminished as, indeed, did all persecutions. He said that after a time a certain deference was shown to priests provided the questions they dealt with were non-political.

These last days the young begin to dance again—a proceeding severely criticized by some of the leading people. Yet surely the time for lamentations is past. The young naturally have the heart and spirit to be gay and have been starved of pleasure long enough. Up to now the *sauteries* are given by people of no

importance and little reputation, but *la jeunesse* is glad to go anywhere and everywhere. Cécile Sorel, the actress, has thrown her large person into the gap and has become the latest and most popular hostess. Her talent is rather over-rated and she is conspicuous mainly because of personal extravagance and incredibly expensive and eccentric garments. They express no individuality and are merely the fantastic creations and disguises of various *costumiers*. Victoria Primrose goes to most of the *sauteries* (but not to Cécile Sorel) and enjoys them wildly. Her widow's weeds¹ are worn with fast diminishing conviction, but who can regret that she is animated by a contagious and lovely *joie de vivre*? Her laughter and good spirits are infectious and stimulating.

November 24th, 1918.

Last night I went with French friends to see Réjane in a piece recently written for her by Henri Bataille. It is well written and well acted—*mais où sont les neiges d'antan*? Actors cannot escape adverse criticism when they maintain too prolonged a fidelity to the footlights.

To-day I had a visit from an old friend, Paul Bourget. He is much changed and *ralenti* but remains a most interesting talker, only he has to be artfully and continually deflected from dwelling upon the charms, intellectual gifts and generally outstanding merits of the British aristocracy. Only persons whose names are inscribed in the Peerage have any interest for him. Remembering his plebeian origin no less than his great literary talent, this peculiarity is astonishing and tends to become indescribably monotonous and boring.

Tuesday, November 28th, 1918.

To-day, in order to see the King's entry into Paris, I made an early start for the Capels' apartment at 88 Avenue du Bois and stayed on with a number of people for luncheon.

It was a wet day and the entry was far from imposing, although guns fired and the streets were lined with troops and with spectators the whole way to the Elysée. The King was in khaki and President Poincaré in evening dress.

Exposed to drenching rain and sitting very low and square beside the King, Poincaré's white shirt and evening clothes

¹ Lady Victoria Primrose's first husband was Lord Rosebery's son, the Hon. Neil Primrose. He was killed in a cavalry charge in Palestine in 1916.

looked rather comic. They drove in a small open victoria drawn by two high-stepping horses, the men on the box wearing plain dark liveries. The carriage was followed by an escort of *cuirassiers* muffled up in what looked like sou'-westers. After them came the Prince of Wales and Prince Albert,¹ together in one carriage, Clémenceau and Lord Derby in another. These were followed by a few more *équipages* that rapidly declined into a tail of taxi-cabs. Strange that the French nation, pre-eminent for good taste, should not organize processions better.

Milly Sutherland² was amongst those who stayed for luncheon. She has taken an apartment here, and incredible as this may seem, has embarked, like a girl of seventeen, on a fresh romance with a good-looking Army officer, a certain Colonel Hawes. Another prominent guest was Princesse Marie Murat,³ just returned from a visit to Strasbourg, and clamorously delighted with everyone and everything seen there, and not least with her gay, animated self. I passed most of the morning in the company of Monsieur de Bondy, a quiet but charming writer, and at intervals "Boy Capel" came and sat down beside us. The *jeune ménage*—his and Diana's—appears oddly assorted. Capel is a curious, rather strange-looking man, more French than English. He has had an eclectic and not unromantic past, yet he is interested—and successfully interested—in big financial affairs. Diana is very pretty and has the charm of all the Listers, but she seems a half-assimilated exotic little figure amongst all these brilliant, vociferous, scintillating French people. They appear metallic, yet I do not think they are fundamentally hard—sensitive rather, in an unsentimental, slightly animal way. I like and admire them, while realizing that they are as different from Anglo-Saxons as it is possible to be. Just "ships that pass in the night", and the best one can do is to signal gaily in passing.

Weary of Paris and of rather hollow rejoicings I return next week to D'Abernon and to Esher Place. The rather sad impression I take away is best expressed in the words of a French writer: "*A Paris on respirait cette odeur de vieille civilisation pourrie . . . un terrain, où tout pousse et rien ne grandit.*"

But Paris is not FRANCE.

¹ King George VI.

² Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland.

³ Princesse Marie Murat subsequently married the Comte de Chambrun, who was French Ambassador in Rome at the time of Laval's Abyssinian negotiations.

CHAPTER VI

1920

ESHER PLACE

Early in June 1920, D'Abernon was offered the post of Ambassador to Germany. Whether the offer originated from his old friend Lord Curzon (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), or was inspired, as seems to me more probable, by Mr. Lloyd George (Prime Minister), it was in either case undoubtedly due to his well-known financial qualifications. These qualifications had been proved long since when at an extremely difficult and critical time, he had been Financial Adviser to the Khedive at Cairo and had succeeded in averting State bankruptcy. The question of Reparations was already creating Inter-Allied differences and threatening to become insoluble.

At the request of George Curzon, D'Abernon left England at once, arriving in Berlin a few hours after the French Ambassador, who had hastened to present his letters the day before. D'Abernon remained only a few days in Berlin because Lloyd George wished him to attend the Inter-Allied Conference at Spa.

Shortly after this the Bolshevik offensive, with Warsaw for its objective, began to be vigorously pressed. The Poles were retreating everywhere, and the Allies decided to send to their assistance a Franco-British Mission. D'Abernon was appointed to lead the British Delegation, and Monsieur de Jusserand¹ and General Weygand were his French opposite numbers. After the arrival of the mission General Weygand, in spite of difficulties arising from Polish susceptibilities, did much in assisting the Poles to reorganize their army for the defence of Warsaw, while D'Abernon and Jusserand, on the diplomatic side, dealt with Pilsudski and other highly susceptible Polish authorities. I believe that it was difficult to induce these authorities to adopt some of General Weygand's recommendations and that at one moment he was deeply offended and with difficulty dissuaded from returning to Paris.

¹ Monsieur de Jusserand had previously been French Ambassador in Washington.

It was during the days when the Mission was hesitating between Warsaw and Posen, to which place the Polish Government and the Legations ultimately retired, that I first went to Berlin. It had been arranged that Lord Kilmarnock, who some weeks after the Armistice had been appointed *Chargé d'Affaires*, should carry on at the Embassy until D'Abernon was free to return and take up the duties of Ambassador. On the domestic side the disorder and inevitable neglect of War and post-War years made it expedient and indeed urgent that I should go and see what was required at the Embassy in the way of a household staff and of re-decorations and furniture. After five years of neglect, followed by a serious fire and the installation in the Embassy of the British Military Mission it was, perhaps, unavoidable that everything (with the exception of a few rooms occupied and cleaned for the Kilmarnocks) should be in a state of indescribable filth and disorder.

I spent ten days in Berlin before returning to England and did not go out again until October. The following entries in my Diary describe Berlin as it appeared when I first arrived at the time of the Bolshevik invasion of Poland in July 1920.

BERLIN DIARY

DOM HOTEL,
COLOGNE.

July 29th, 1920.

Arrived at Cologne at 6.30 a.m. There is still no through train to Berlin, and although a compartment from Ostend had been specially reserved for me there were so few coaches that it was successfully stormed at an early stage of the night. The compartments labelled "First" are in reality "Third". The seats are covered with rough "ersatz" leather and are stuffed with some extremely hard, nondescript, unyielding substance. The washing place contained no scrap of looking-glass, nor even a drop of water.

Although Edgar is away in Poland, Winston Churchill,¹ his wife and a few other friends spent last Sunday with me at Esher Place. Winston kindly arranged that I should be met by a military magnate at Cologne, with the happy result that ten minutes after arrival, I was already comfortably breakfasting in this hotel.

General Sir Robert Hutchison, somewhat blunt in outline but acute in intelligence, took me out to luncheon at the house he and his wife occupy in a suburb of Cologne. It is a pre-tentious, comfortable, modern villa, decorated *à la Louis XV* (in

¹ At this time Mr. Winston Churchill was Secretary of State for War.

the German manner) and it belongs to people called von Guillaume. By the Treaty of Versailles, Germans are compelled, in the occupied area, to provide not merely lodging, but light, firing, service, plate and linen for all Allied officers and their families. Consequently the Hutchisons are enjoying a paradoxical combination of luxury and economy. Talk at luncheon was mainly about officers' games and competitions, but also occasionally about the Germans. Both the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Alexander Godley, elderly and reserved, and Sir Robert Hutchison (who is much younger) are convinced that the Germans will presently re-arm. In the rural districts, the country people (as opposed to the more sophisticated townspeople) are, so they told me, quite well-disposed and *fröhlich*, but in Cologne itself faces are wry and sour.

I feel rather overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task awaiting us in Berlin. Except for German music I have never felt attracted by Germany or by German things, and to try and re-establish relatively pleasant normal relations will require a mountain of effort and of persevering goodwill.

I am assured that there will be a train and even a *wagon-lit* to Berlin to-night.

The Polish news is bad. Apparently the advancing Bolsheviks are menacing and truculent. The proposed Armistice ought to be signed to-night, but everything in connection with the Anglo-French Mission is uneasy and uncertain.

August 4th, 1920.

I arrived early on July 31st, and, being unversed in diplomatic etiquette, was somewhat dismayed by being met at the station in the cold light of six a.m. (unprepared and looking my worst) by Lord Kilmarnock, and the whole Embassy Staff. Since then the days have been spent in endeavouring to straighten out some of the confusion that prevails on the domestic *Hausfrau* side of the Embassy. I have been much assisted by the efficient endeavours of a clerk sent out by the Office of Works. The garage and wide-spread maze of an enormous circuitous basement are literally an Augean stable. It is proposed to employ soldiers to clear away the filth and rubbish, because they have assumed proportions that no servants could cope with. Perhaps orderlies may tackle the situation effectually.

The ground floor, on which are all the living-rooms, may eventually become nice enough, but the bedroom floor will never

be satisfactory. The front of the house faces close on to the asphalt of the Wilhelmstrasse, while the back is completely overhung by the vast and gloomy Adlon Hotel. Downstairs an enormous dining-room has been redecorated (after a fire that destroyed it last year) in the hybrid Georgian style peculiar to the Office of Works. D'Abernon is undismayed by the dimensions of the bedroom above it, and I have elected to sleep in a room at the back that is divinely quiet and sufficiently light and airy. There is no good furniture in the house, no tapestry and no pictures. The only things of "virtue" that I have discovered are a fine silver-gilt dinner service and some large pieces of gold plate in the style of the first Empire and dated Vienna 1815.¹

The Polish news does not improve. The Bolsheviks seem to be resolved on neither signing Armistice negotiations nor frankly breaking them off. I suppose this is in order to enable them to press on without meeting any organized opposition. Those competent to form an opinion seem to think that Poland and the Corridor are destined to cause endless trouble.

The depression and low vitality of the common folk that prevail in Berlin would be evident to the least observant spectator. Morally, mentally and physically they all look "down and out". Not but what a few plump *fraus* and *fräuleins* may occasionally be seen in those streets that remotely correspond to Piccadilly and Bond Street. But at dusk and as early as 4 a.m. one sees—going to and from their work—the drawn faces and bent shoulders, the thin clothes and ill-shod feet of underfed men and women. A skeleton of a boy has just passed the window, slowly dragging a cart full of some miserable merchandise.

The room the Kilmarnocks have allotted me looks over the Wilhelmstrasse, and at night the noise on the asphalt road prevents me from sleeping. I spend hours at the window, watching the lumbering conveyances and the unusual pedestrians that pass to and fro. Sometimes the sights are peculiar and intriguing. Last night a woman (as at first sight I took the figure to be) dressed in a light coat and skirt, a large hat and a floating veil, stood ever so long on the opposite side of the street in a dark doorway. At last she was joined by a man. After exchanging a few words they strolled away towards Unter den Linden. Then it was that the flat feet and heavy silhouette made me realize that this was a man dressed like a woman. When the figure

¹ 1815 was the year in which the Congress of Vienna terminated and dispersed.

advanced into the glare of the lamplight I saw that round the waist of the jacket was strapped a military belt from which hung a scabbard. It was not the first time that from my window I have seen men street-walkers dressed up as women, but never before one with a cavalry belt and sabre superadded.

The Kaiser Friedrich Museum is original, interesting and well-arranged. The silk hangings on the walls, the Rinascimento doorways brought by Dr. Bode from Italy and the decoration generally (both as regards colour and materials) are more satisfying to æsthetic sensibility than is the decorative scheme of the National Gallery, but, while there are not a few masterpieces, the majority of pictures are inferior to those in England and a large proportion are much repainted. I had some difficulty in finding my way to the museum because neither the Kilmarnocks nor any member of the Chancery could furnish the smallest indication as to the direction in which it would be found.

Strolling about the streets and parks, people as a rule answer civilly enough if one asks the way, but they obviously realize that one's personality and clothes are not German. They stare with some curiosity, coupled with marked aversion.

BERLIN.

August 5th, 1920.

General Sir Francis Bingham, who together with General Nollet is at the head of the Inter-allied Commission of Disarmament, came in to-day much perturbed by a rumour that England may have to go to war in defence of Poland, should the Bolsheviks advance much farther. Like many others here he seems to think that Poland is destined to become a storm-centre for the Allies.

Lord Kilmarnock and the young people went to a dance this evening, given at one of the hotels by an American.

August 6th, 1920.

To-day I re-visited the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, and again came back on foot, meeting Dr. Dresel, the American Commissioner, on the Embassy doorstep when I returned. Owing to America not yet being technically at peace with Germany, they have no *chargé d'affaires*. Dr. Dresel is of German-Jewish origin and consequently he understands the position here better than most people. Government officials in the Wilhelmstrasse have convinced him (and apparently Lord Kilmarnock is of the same opinion) that should events in Warsaw take a bad turn and

the Bolsheviks obtain possession of the city, there will be civil war in Germany—Communists versus Reactionists and the middle class.

There appears to be a great deal of friction going on between the French *Chargé d’Affaires* and the German *Staats Sekretär* for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Simons. It arises from the flag-incident. The French insist that the officer who was in command of the troops that sang *Deutschland Uber Alles* when marching past the French Embassy shall be discharged or degraded. The march past was compulsory and had been demanded by the French as a penalty for someone [unidentified] having climbed up and hauled down the French flag that floated over the Embassy. Apparently Dr. Simons consented verbally to the dismissal of the officer in command, but nothing further has been done about it. The French accuse Simons of being *de mauvaise foi*. Although a lawyer and a German, he has, it would seem, an obstinate mind veiled by an acquiescent manner, and apparently he seldom says the same thing for long, whether in the Reichstag or outside it. No doubt this is due in a measure to the complicated conditions and difficulties inherent in his office at the present time.

6th August, 1920.

BERLIN.

Lord Kilmarnock received to-day a telegram from the Foreign Office saying that D’Abernon is being asked to remain for the present in Warsaw. We hear that although everyone who is in a position to leave is leaving, yet there is no panic, only stupendous and interminable religious processions. The people who quit are those who can well afford to do so and apparently, with Slav fatalism or insouciance, those who go leave all their worldly goods behind them.

August 7th, 1920.

To-day a telegram from Warsaw announces that the Bolsheviks are close to the town and that the outlook is so menacing that all the Legations, Government Archives, etc., have been instructed to leave immediately for Posen. Three Red Armies are converging on Warsaw and the Poles are putting up no serious resistance. Cypher telegrams continue to reach the Embassy without much delay, but no private telegrams get through at all. Lord Kilmarnock, from whom it is as easy to elicit news as to draw water from a plugged tap, admits that the existing Government has practically no control over the Post Office officials in East Prussia. The Socialist *employés* take holidays, transmit

messages—in whole or in part—exactly as they please. There is, he allows, at the present time, a heavy leaven of Communism permeating Germany, but it is the Government's policy to camouflage it and to hope that it will presently seep away. All over Europe war between nations seems to have given way to an almost worse war between classes, or, to be explicit, a war directed by all wage-earners against those who live on acquired incomes. The Professional and the small *rentier* classes wage war on no one and are the chief sufferers because they have much less to live on than the wage-earners.

To-day I have decided that, as the task for which I came to Berlin is completed, and as it is evident that D'A. cannot rejoin me here, nor I him at Posen (as I had hoped) I had best return to England to-morrow.

Before quitting the Embassy I will jot down my impression of Lord Kilmarnock. Physically he is an insignificant little man, but I fancy he may be endowed with shrewdness and sang-froid. His favourite occupation is acting and play-writing. He is not particularly interested in passing events which perhaps accounts for apparent lack of fore-sight and initiative. An amiable trait is his kindness and compassion for "down and outs". He begs me to take on all the people he now employs but as these are mostly cripples and derelicts, I skate lightly away from the subject whenever it is raised, being resolved to engage an entirely new and efficient staff when we come to the Embassy.

ESHER PLACE, SURREY.

August 10th, 1920.

There is a report in the newspapers to-day that D'Abernon and Monsieur de Jusserand have been forcibly prevented from leaving Warsaw, but after getting in touch with Sir Maurice Hankey on the telephone, I learn that things are not so bad as the press makes out. George Curzon¹ has telegraphed to D'A. that it is essential he should remain at Warsaw so there he is, and the Foreign Office hope and think that all will be well. Since then, however, no news has got through and this was several days ago. It is harassing to know so little.

August 14th, 1920.

The wretched anxiety of the last few days is at an end. George Curzon writes to me to-day that the Warsaw Legation with Sir

¹ Lord Curzon was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Horace Rumbold at its head has at last been evacuated and that the Special Mission comprising D'Abernon, Jusserand and their retinue have also left for Posen.

August 17th, 1920.

To-day I had luncheon with Philip Sassoon. The Prime Minister,¹ Winston Churchill and Evan Charteris² were the only other guests. The P.M. appeared much relieved that Parliament was prorogued and the last Cabinet meeting just over. (It was 2.30 before they came in for luncheon).

After a few uninterested remarks about Warsaw, Lloyd George began to talk about what is evidently uppermost in his mind, the new situation created by the leap into being of the "Council of Action". When asked by Winston whether he thought it was, from the Labour point of view, a good move, he said that as a political manoeuvre for parliamentary influence he considered it a bad move, but if the "Council of Action" really mean to work for revolution, then, from their point of view, it might be a good one. Both the P.M. and Winston are evidently anxious about the situation. They discussed the possibility of an attempt to capture the War Office! Winston became rhetorical and talked of the War Office standing "with its back to the river in a fine strategical position". Lloyd George drew a bee-line to the essential point, and said that the real danger was a *coup de main* at night, at a time when the War Office is insufficiently staffed. The morale of certain troops and their doubtful reliability came under discussion. It appears that many of the Irish Guards, now quartered in Chelsea Barracks, feed on Communist books and papers and are pure Sinn Fein. Winston thinks it would be very undesirable to draw attention to this by moving them before their scheduled time to Pirbright. Ll. G. said that some excuse could easily be found and that they ought to be removed and removed at once.

The talk then diverged on to housing conditions, especially in the industrial areas. All agreed that conditions are deplorable. Philip Sassoon said that the Labour Party, in order to foster the general discontent, was purposely hindering the Trade Unions from allowing men in the building trade to do a full day's work. Apparently to create and encourage discontent is a lever much advocated in the Bolshevik elementary manuals. Winston recalled that Lenin is reported to have said that Russia was the

¹ Mr. Lloyd George.

² Hon. Sir Evan Charteris, K.C.

easiest country in which to start a revolution, but the most difficult one in which to keep a revolution going, while in England there would be no difficulty in keeping it going; the difficulty was to get it started. Ll. G. thought the widespread discontent with Parliamentary methods and delays was more than justified. He said: "Parliament is a mill which grinds slowly and painfully and even at the end turns out such a very little corn." He deplored that, in the last fifty years or more, nothing had been done by either Party when in power to improve the conditions under which Industry lives and works. He compared conditions in England with the improved methods adopted both in Belgium and in Germany, where the industrial classes have decent detached houses, surrounded by recreation grounds and parks. After this the talk veered towards propaganda, the P.M. and Winston agreeing that only the Labour Party carry it out effectively, and that no constitutional paper is being run as a counterblast to the "*Herald*".

The P.M.'s views and verdicts are extremely uncompromising and clear-cut. Strengthened as he has been by the prestige of winning the War it is surprising that he should have made no attempt to put some of his reforming ideas into practice. Both Parties have in recent years been lethargic and unsympathetic where industry is concerned, but since Ll. G. has the vision to realize industry's almost intolerable conditions, why has he not attempted to alleviate them?

The estrangement between him and George Curzon is temperamental; consequently irremediable and complete. Once only did he mention the Foreign Secretary, and then it was to depreciate, with a malicious smile, his prodigious industry and devotion to detail.

To-day as always, he was a live wire in thought and in graphic verbal expression but he looked an ageing and a very tired man.

August 22nd, 1920.

PORT LYMPNE.

These last days, life at Esher Place has been largely made up of wearisome sortings and inventories, preparatory to the "long trail" to Berlin, so that it is a joy to be released from lists and packing cases and to have come here for a few days of complete change and rest.

Philip Sassoon has created at Lympne a luxurious, semi-oriental and wholly incoherent "Petit Palais" of peace and pleasure. The wind blows in from the sea and the sea fills the

horizon which stretches far and wide beyond a middle distance of open country and a foreground of descending terraces abundantly furnished with rare and beautiful flowers.

On the edge of the sea stand Pitt's Martello towers. They seem in these last years to have regained something of their old significance.

Fellow-guests are Edward and Portia Stanley, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, and Freda Dudley Ward, besides several unknown airmen. Freda is the decorative tenant of one of Philip's little villa houses near-by. Louis Mallet (our too optimistic Ambassador at Constantinople previous to the War and during the early part of it) is living in another.

From an artistic point of view, Philip has not been altogether successful at Lympne. A fortune has been squandered, but the house is not large and there is no unity of design or effect. Out of doors everything is on a scale too vast for the house itself. An imposing white marble stairway near the back of the house climbs steeply up the hill like a Jacob's ladder, but it leads to nothing in particular. In front of the house is an enormous marble swimming-pool, flanked by two colossal bastions. They give emphasis, but dwarf the house. To these unusual features has been added (not on the ground floor but on the first floor) an imitation of a Spanish patio. It is complete with a fountain supplied by a water conduit (that rises in the kitchen). These and other anomalies are accumulated with Arabian Night profusion. Still one could not be more comfortably or more luxuriously lodged, and Philip's kindness and Puckish humour make him the best and the least exigent of hosts.

ESHER PLACE.

August 26th, 1920.

I returned to-day to Esher and found a telegram from Cracow announcing that D'A. and the Mission have finally left Warsaw, whither they had returned after the Bolshevik retreat. It appears that the situation in Germany, no less than here in England, is enormously eased by the retreat of the Bolsheviks. Their defeat is the more welcome because so totally unexpected. The other side of the picture is that England's see-saw policy has been neither helpful nor dignified, and the veering weather-cock telegrams and despatches that D'A. received from George Curzon doubled his difficulties not only with the Polish authorities, but even more embarrassing with the French delegation.

CHAPTER VII

1920

BERLIN

BRITISH EMBASSY.

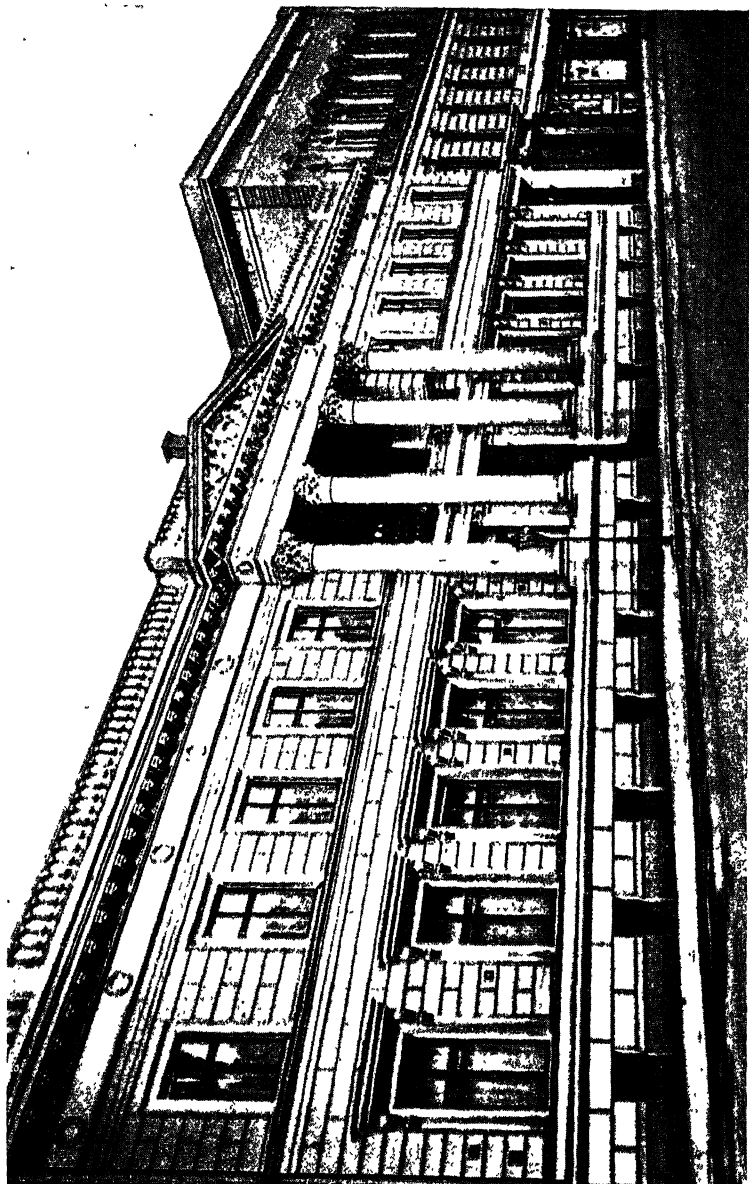
BERLIN.

October 25th, 1920.

D'Abernon and I left London yesterday and arrived here to-day feeling fairly fresh, although no *wagon-lit* through service has yet been inaugurated between Cologne and Berlin. Surprisingly enough, almost as soon as we arrived I received a visit from Count Paul Wolff-Metternich.¹ He is much aged and in great financial straits to which he alluded in his usual mournful *adagio* tempo. His story is that the reason his Embassy in London came to an abrupt end in 1912 was because of the German Government's anti-British naval policy. He had ventured to express disagreement with the views of Tirpitz and of the Kaiser and for this he was summarily superseded. For the Emperor the Navy was, so Wolff-Metternich said, a new and expensive toy. He did not see, or would not admit, that the rapidly increasing power of the German navy was a menace to which Lord Grey and the British Government could not but take exception. Our conversation drifted a little towards the dangerous topic of responsibility for the War and knowing him so well I had hoped that we could talk of it in a detached and tolerant way but this was not so. He is further embittered because when he left London in 1912 he confided his small private fortune to Sir Ernest Cassel to be safely and profitably invested in England and owing to the unforeseen sequestration of enemy property the whole of it has been confiscated. He now eats the bread of a pensioner, living with a brother very little better off than himself in a small Schloss on the Rhine. An Ambassador's pension in Germany amounts, at the present time, to less than half of what are a labourer's wages.

To-day the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Frau Simons invited us to have tea with them. In Berlin it is the fashion to

¹ German Ambassador in London between 1901 and 1912.



The British Embassy in Berlin

make a parade of poverty and retrenchment, so in order to be in harmony with the prevailing atmosphere, I attired myself in a demure dove-coloured frock of Puritan simplicity. The official residence of the *Staat-Sekretär* is a villa, standing in its own grounds, between the Tiergarten and the Wilhelmstrasse. We were received by a parlour-maid of the Ibsen type, who passed us on to a waiter obviously hired for the occasion. It seems that since August 1914 we are the first people from an enemy country to cross the threshold. We were shown into a small formal sitting-room on the ground floor, and immediately after, Frau Simons came in; she is middle-aged, rather handsome and her manner was dignified and only slightly embarrassed. She was dressed more than simply in what can at no time have been a covetable costume, but under the circumstances it seemed appropriate and right. We spoke German together and conversation languished, mainly because I speak German badly. For me it was a relief when she broke into correspondingly indifferent English. As soon as Dr. Simons came in we moved to a large table which was parsimoniously covered by a small and frugal tea, mainly consisting of china. Simons always speaks French, but he was so nervous and selfconscious that French did not make things easier. However, he and I talked a little of the conference at Spa, which he had attended, and then about his early Rhineland days, when he was a lawyer (or was it a Judge?) somewhere near Frankfurt. After this D'A. took up the running and I devoted myself to Frau Excellenz. We discussed Berlin concerts and music, a subject she thoroughly understands. Simons is young-looking for his fifty-nine years, dark, not tall, rather thin and anæmic and altogether most un-Prussian in appearance.

As we were leaving D'A. told me that another Frenchman has been killed* (as is continually happening) somewhere in the Provinces. The British soldiers do not seem to provoke insults and injuries, let alone assassination, which is creditable to them and a relief to D'Abernon.

BERLIN.

October 30th, 1920.

A long wandering walk last evening brought home to me that Berlin lacks the charm and romance of cities that have matured slowly with succeeding centuries. There are no narrow streets, no changes of level, no crooked passages, no unexpected courts and corners.

On the positive side there are innumerable and enormous marble statues, for the most part of very inferior quality. Architecture is devoid of any marked tendency or character. Aggressive modern skyscrapers jostle with other houses equally modern and indifferently suggestive of Nuremburg or occasionally of Palladio. The squares, unlike those in London, are not enclosed and are usually destitute of trees.

The majority of public buildings are not very large and lack distinction, with the exception of some few eighteenth-century ones, designed by French architects (Blondel amongst them) who were lured to Berlin by Frederick the Great. Amongst these are the Charlottenburg Palast, the Zeug Haus, and the Auswärtiges Amt. The Brandenburger Thor is of a later date, but seen on an autumn evening, against the setting sun, its dark, threatening outline is impressive and not unbeautiful, while the Tiergarten that stretches beyond it, though dead flat, is full of charm. It has straight avenues alternating with meandering green glades and is larger and more countrified than Hyde Park, and therefore pleasanter and more varied for riding.

To-day, Dr. Wirth, Minister of Finance, came to luncheon and from the depths of an unviolated pre-war cellar some excellent old vintage, left by Sir Edward Goschen,¹ was exhumed. It appeared to have a genial, mellowing effect upon Wirth. Florid and heavy, he is very unlike Dr. Simons, and fortunately, his table talk proved less depressed and depressing than his public utterances. He wears the inevitable German spectacles. D'A. and he talked almost exclusively about the financial situation.

BERLIN.

October 31st, 1920.

Last evening D'A. held his diplomatic reception. Owing to his absence in Poland and elsewhere it has been deferred until now. At the other Embassies these ritual receptions have been in the afternoon. D'Abernethy decided to make an innovation and to have his in the evening. Women as well as men were included so that it developed into the first big official party since 1914. The chiefs of the Inter-Allied Commissions of Control attended as well as the whole *Corps Diplomatique* and the Auswärtiges Amt, about three hundred people in all. The white and yellow ballroom was open for the first time since 1914 and all

¹ Sir Edward Goschen was Ambassador in Berlin until the Declaration of War in August 1914.

the rooms were gay with flowers. The servants were arrayed in gorgeous buff and scarlet liveries which we found stored here by the score, and which survive from the fêtes offered by Sir Frank Lascelles to the Kaiser. At the entrance stood two of the old German retainers, Fritz and Elf, enjoying the recovery of their cocked hats and egregiously long, gold-laced coats. (These long coats constitute a uniform immemorially donned by hall-porters in Berlin Embassies.) The porters principal duty seems to consist in holding, with outstretched arms, long gilt staves surmounted (in this Embassy) by the British Royal Arms. Then, but only when specially *Wichtige* guests arrive, they strike their staves three times on the ground. It sounds like the three taps that raise the curtain at the Théâtre Français. All this was carried out exactly as it used to be before 1914. I wished the Embassy to appear no less luxurious and dignified than it had been in the years before the War, because the first time people visit a place they notice what it looks like. The German officials must have thought that England remained—at least to all appearances—solid and unchanged. Among the guests beauty was not conspicuous, but the various Commissions of Control were in uniform and the *Corps Diplomatique*, wearing their stars and ribbons, looked colourful and gay. In the dining-room, the Empire gold plate was piled high upon the sideboards. It is rather surprising that it should have lain safe and uninjured in the basement of the Embassy all through the War.

I did not exchange ten interesting words with anyone, excepting perhaps with a Bolshevik, from the Ukraine. His political creed did not seem to preclude enjoyment of an *ancien régime* type of party.

BERLIN.

November 2nd, 1920.

Last night we dined at the Hôtel Adlon next door. The dinner was given in private rooms by Princess Radziwill. She is a Polish war-widow now living in Paris, and has come to Berlin in order to try to regain possession of some wonderful jewels that belonged to her mother and which lie deposited here in a Government safe. We had been told that Prince and Princess Blücher had been asked to meet us, together with other Germans, and we arrived purposely a few minutes late in order to abbreviate the inevitably embarrassed interval before dinner. As we came in, the loud harsh voices faded out and there fell on the assembled company a complete and glacial silence. It seemed as though it

would never end, and Princess Radziwill said nothing and did nothing, being obviously disconcerted by so unexpected and prolonged a hush. I did not feel awkward or embarrassed, only very anxious to get things on to an easier footing, and D'Abernon stood beside me with Olympian calm and indifference. At long last Princess Radziwill presented everyone, and after that the ice seemed to be broken—or, at all events, a little cracked. . . . At dinner conversation, although not effortless, was more or less general—not just talking to one's neighbour, as at London banquets, and now that this first meeting with Germans is over, I suppose that nothing social will be quite so difficult and disagreeable again. Princess Blücher is English and a Catholic; she is tall and handsome with pleasing quiet ways; not brilliant, I should imagine, but dignified and tactful, with a straightforward, easy manner. Princess Radziwill is a tiny, restless imp of a woman, very dark with black, bead-like eyes and quick, darting movements like a lizard. She is half Spanish, the two remaining quarters being respectively Polish and Russian, and she is quite obviously a network of nerves. She has recently engaged herself to her cousin, Prince "Loche" Radziwill (a brother of the Duchesse de Doudeauville) and this although her husband was killed only a few months ago, at the time of the Bolshevik invasion of Poland. They were not happy together and he met with a horrible death. Taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks he was cruelly maltreated and mutilated. When his body was exhumed for identification, it was found to be perforated all over with stabs, and the skin of the hands had been pulled off and turned back like gloves. Princess Radziwill chatters about this without reticence, as glibly as one might do (yet hardly would do) had the unfortunate man been a monkey or a cat.

BERLIN.

November 6th, 1920.

To-day is the anniversary of the Russian revolution, and to celebrate the occasion there is a strike that extends to all electric stations. Every street in Berlin is plunged in Cimmerian darkness. Coupled with *Der Tag* is the usual demand for higher wages. One wonders what happens to those who have no wages and therefore cannot strike for a rise?

I have engaged a German girl from the Berlitz School to come daily for an hour to talk German with me; she is young, sensible and not unpleasing. From her I try to discover whether the

Berlitz fees are not too low to cover the present cost of living. She looks half starved, but as she is sensitive and reserved, I have to begin nibbling sandwiches myself in order to induce her to share them. She admits that although there is much poverty, there is not actual want among the industrial classes; that these classes are in reality far better off than her own, because their wages continually rise. Hand labour gets much more than a living wage, she says, while small *rentiers*, professors, artists and teachers have less and less to live upon and at the same time—owing to the pervading poverty—are getting fewer and fewer pupils.

In Berlin profiteers are called *Schieber*. I discover that the dictionary suggests "Umbrella" (or some part of its structure) as an equivalent, but the word is now used to express a shover (one who shoves), the idea being another turn of the screw. The hotels are full of these "screw-drivers"; they eat and drink and live like fighting-cocks. Their women wear fur coats with pearls and other jewels on the top of them, the effect of which is further emphasized by the surprising addition of high yellow boots. *Schieber* are the brass pillars that support dancing palaces and other less reputable resorts.

November 14th, 1920.

This has been a very German day. Only three weeks have passed since we arrived, and already I have grown quite accustomed to meeting every kind of German. So far prejudices have not evaporated, but these are early days for a rigid, pre-conceived and possibly erroneous notion of national character to become modified.

Schiffer, formerly Vice-Chancellor and now Minister of Justice, came to luncheon; Herr von Haniel and Princess Radolin came to tea. Von Haniel is Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and is a typical Prussian of the pre-War type. His figure appears to have been cut out of a piece of more than usually substantial cardboard, and he has a deep scar right across his face, the result not of war, but of a students' ¹ duel; however, he speaks English; an unusual accomplishment that I appreciate.

He said that those who are unfriendly to Dr. Simons reproach him with a lack of organizing ability. They say that he tries to do everything himself (with the inevitable result that a great

¹ Students' scars are seldom due to quarrels. They fight for sport. In these encounters the eyes are protected but cheeks are left exposed.

deal is left undone), that he comes home very late in the evening, and even then will toil in his study till the small hours of the morning, much to his wife's concern.

Little Princess Radolin I first met soon after I married, when Prince Radolin was German Ambassador at Constantinople and Edgar was Governor of the Ottoman Bank. Radolin died in 1915, and since then she has fallen on evil days. During the war, already in November 1914, she was convicted of having pro-Entente sympathies owing to an indiscreet letter written to a French (or was it a Belgian?) relation in which she had the imprudence to deplore the cruelties perpetrated by the German Army in Belgium. The letter was intercepted and submitted to the Kaiser. The Radolins were living on their estates in Posen and the notorious General Bernhardt happened to be Governor of the Province at that time. She was placed under house arrest and was only permitted to remain in Prince Radolin's *Schloss* after he had undertaken to answer for her conduct and discretion with his life. To-day she related conversations that passed between themselves and General Bernhardt about these same atrocities in Belgium and the jokes he would make about them. . . . On one occasion he said: "It is evident that the Belgians enjoy martyrdom and ascending to Heaven," and then he added laughing: "You ought to be glad these good people have been given so wonderful an opportunity."

Of the Germans I have seen up to now, the one I appreciate most is Herr Schiffer. He is cultured, broad-minded, philosophical, and sometimes so shrewd in what he implies, as to be almost *fin*. He is also courageous, for at the time of the *Kapp Putsch*, when all the Ministers bolted, he alone remained in Berlin. He was Vice-Chancellor at the time.

November 15th, 1920.

The Italian Ambassador and Donna Antonietta di Martino asked us to-day to luncheon to meet Prince and Princess von Bülow. At Bülow's request, there were to be no other guests. The Princess is very deaf, but bright, animated and forthcoming. At once one infers that she cannot be German and she is in fact Italian. Prince Bülow looks as though when young he may well have been vital and vigorous, but he is now very old. This did not prevent him from shouting at me like a megaphone, no doubt he has contracted this practice from talking to his deaf wife. Like many Germans, he appears not to hold with the idea that

conversation is a slightly different thing from monologue. Either he remains dumb and inscrutable, or else he harangues the company as though he were broadcasting.

The few representatives of the old Court that we have met seem to be rather unintelligent people, and are also the least well disposed, but Prince Bülow is, of course, a citizen of the world no less than of the Reich. The long monologues revealed a prodigious memory and a good sense of humour, but though phenomenally well-informed, experienced and astute, the net result is a little ponderous. Still, we remained from 1 o'clock until 3.30 and the time did not seem long. I find that with Germans the only difficult moment is the first. When that is past *gêne* need not recur, but one must always find the opening phrase oneself, and it must be simple and preferably rather personal in order to put one's *vis-à-vis* on ground where he is conscious of having the advantage. To-day, after Prince Bülow was presented, I exploited the unpleasing circumstance that he was obviously recovering from a heavy cold. From this, and from the climate here, it was an easy transition to Rome, where the Bülows pass the winter months in their beautiful Villa Malta which they have re-christened "*delle Rose*".

Although a large part of his life has been spent south of the Alps, he does not speak Italian grammatically and subsided in the drawing-room on to what he called "*questa piccola seggiolone*".

November 16th, 1920.

To-day we had luncheon with General Niell Malcolm, to meet Monsieur Haguenet, who has had what, for a Frenchman, is an unusual career. He has lived long in Germany, knows everyone in Berlin, and is strongly in favour of a revision of the Versailles Treaty. He speaks volubly and easily and coined epigrammatic estimates of Clémenceau, Poincaré, Briand, Millerand and others. I don't know his origin but he looks, thinks and talks like an Alsatian.

November 24th, 1920.

I receive many begging letters and read in the Press so much about grinding want and misery that I have arranged to go out very early one morning this week in order to visit the poorest quarters, to see a crèche and to be present at the medical examination of children in one of the schools. A German lady, who is a sort of district visitor, will accompany me: she speaks

English and has had experience of similar work in England and Scotland.

I think there was no window-dressing for my benefit, because, if there had been and in order to wring the tough vitals of British compassion, worse cases would have been produced. Poverty certainly exists, but there is little misery and no starvation. Much is being done to prevent this by an admirable organization composed partly of English Quakers and partly of generous-hearted Americans. Between them they provide mid-day meals at almost all the children's schools, and also at central kitchens in various parts of the town, where, by means of a system of tickets (distributed by local agents who know the deserving cases), those who are really destitute never fail to obtain food.

Contrasting the condition of some families I saw, who were living four or five in one room, with that of slum families in London, Dublin or Glasgow, it is obvious that the scales of poverty are not unduly weighed down in Berlin. First and foremost, there are no real slums. The houses are mostly modern buildings, well designed, sanitary and well exposed, no dark tortuous passages, no corkscrew stairs, no back-yards and underground cellars—above all, none of the fog, smoke and gloom that for months hang over the slums in our big cities, and which even in summer leave behind them an ineradicable coat of soot, dirt and darkness.

On the organization side there is a sanitary "vigilance" system. It existed already under the Second Reich and is still in force. All workmen's flats and dwellings are periodically inspected, and, by a system of penalties, they are maintained in a relatively clean and sanitary condition. Was it not Voltaire who wrote "Poverty enervates Courage?" In Germany it would seem that it girds the loins for prolonged and persevering effort.

Some of the hard cases I saw resembled those one meets with everywhere. Others, more pathetic, were typical of the Berlin of to-day. People who, before and during the War, belonged to a decent and comfortable middle class, have through no fault of their own, declined to a lower stratum. In the small back room of a basement we found, totally idle and drearily seated on a deal box, a young woman and child, without either furniture or fire. The husband had been a shoemaker and, during his absence with the Army, she grew poorer and poorer.

Prices rose continually and in order to get food for herself and the child she had gradually sold everything she possessed. We found her living in this bare, tiny little room, the six-year-old boy clinging to her torn dress, which she said she had no longer the spirit nor even the needle and thread to mend. The bed was a palliasse, thrown down in a corner, and had no covering but an old shawl. This was far the worst case we saw, but even here starvation is averted by the new central kitchen organization where food—not of first-rate quality, but still sufficient to keep body and soul together—can always be obtained.

My cicerone was unfortunate in one instance, for when she suggested that I should ask to look at a hump-back woman's employment card, the woman produced an obvious fake with wrong dates and entries, the last application for employment being already eight months old. Another case, located in a very low quarter, was that of a woman whom we found cooking a surprisingly decent meal over a gas fire. Enquiry elicited that the rent was well covered by a back room let out to two juvenile little street-walkers. These we found asleep together in the inner room. On the whole, I brought back a slightly reassured impression. Misery is less black than it has been painted. Everyone seems to have some kind of *pot-au-feu* for dinner and none were so poor (except the shoemaker's wife, whose case I have cited) but that they could still subscribe for a gas cooker. (True that, as the district visitor explained, the Municipality give gas in the poorest quarters for practically nothing.) One thing impressed me favourably—and that was the prevalence of neatness and order. These too often-neglected and under-rated qualities are indications of so much that is good. A certain standard of tidiness—inartistic no doubt, but sound and clean and wholesome—is toiled for and maintained untiringly by German women. It seems to be woven into the fibre of their hands and hearts. Amongst the *petite bourgeoisie*, spare pieces of household crockery are neatly arranged on shelves or chimney pieces, or tied up on to a nail with gay little coloured ribbons. The idea finds its counterpart in the poorest interiors. * A broken tea-pot or a cracked water-jug, hanging forlornly on a peg, is yet adorned by scraps of clean blue or pink paper carefully pinked out into streamers.

We visited several schools. They vary considerably and in the Neu Köln district the children seemed to be anæmic and underfed. Often they turned out to be two years older than

they looked. One crèche that we saw owed its origin to a Good Samaritan lady, who during the War could no longer afford to run it. The Municipality took it over but lately they too have had to give it up and now it is run by the Society of Friends—the *Quaker Speisung*, as it is called, supplying the food.

At the end of a three hours' inspection, during which every pause had been filled by the district visitor with complaints and criticisms of the British blockade and of the evils it had brought about, I could not resist murmuring demurely that both in France and in England one need not go far to find people suffering greater privations. To this she replied: "Yes, of course, but it is so dreadful that there should be want here *in Berlin*; here we never have had slums and misery as in England." After this it seemed idle to pursue the subject of relative hardships any further.

Having commenced a round of personal investigations, I am now going with Miss Fry to see the various soup kitchens run by the Quakers. I want particularly to see her special stunt, the University Students' feeding centre. Miss Fry is all self-sacrifice and burning enthusiasm, but her compassion seems to be reserved almost exclusively for Germans. She shys away from any allusion to suffering and privations in Great Britain, such as those of the unemployed in the North of England and in Wales.

November 26th, 1920.

General Von Seeckt, Commander-in-Chief of whatever remnants survive of the German Army, came to-day to luncheon. General Sir Francis Bingham and the Disarmament Control Commission believe him to be acting very correctly. He is tall, thin and knife-like, with unwavering steel-grey eyes that look capable of facing anything—or inflicting anything—unflinchingly. Though stiff and rigid in manner, he is obviously well born and well educated. He belongs to the landed Junker class and consequently he has little except exaggerated patriotism in common with the present Socialist Government. After trying various international topics, D'Abernon boldly launched conversation on to the subject of the War. Von Seeckt said he had not read Lüdendorff's *Memoirs*, which have just come out, and that he could not and would not read books about the War, also that he had been mainly employed on the Russian,

Turkish and Italian fronts. Apparently it was his strategy (though he did not say this himself) that was largely responsible for the German successes in Roumania. He said the Turks were the best Allies the Germans had, although less tough and enduring than the Bulgarians. The Austrians were very much the worst of all. Von Seeckt appeared to me very able and clever, the kind of man for whom war is a science that can only be understood and should only be discussed by those who have technique and experience. A fine type in his way; dry, hard, logical, inexorable—yet humorous—not without sensitiveness, although this was possibly accentuated by the circumstances in which he found himself; the recipient of what was conceivably unwelcome hospitality at the British Embassy.

November 27th, 1920.

To-day I had a confidential talk with Colonel Bosanquet, who knows as much as anyone about the actual process of disarmament that is in progress. He says that the German officers combine in order to evade the search for arms. A common dodge to avoid confiscation is to keep whole truck-loads of small arms moving up and down the railway lines. Sometimes, usually for a bribe, a Wehrmacht officer will give information. The other day, on a farm where it was suspected that arms were hidden, the proprietor was cross-examined by an English officer. This man categorically denied that there were any arms whatever in the farm buildings. The officer finally said: "Well, as a mere matter of form, I think we must search some of your premises." In a shed, of which the door had to be forced, were found piles and piles of machine-guns and rifles. After the discovery, the proprietor did not show the slightest confusion nor did he offer any explanation; he just shrugged his shoulders and went on smoking a large Rip van Winkle pipe.

In Bavaria, a centre where Italian officers have charge of disarmament, arms are not coming in at all. General Bingham is not clear whether this results from apathy on the part of the Italians, or from tacit complicity with the Germans. Bosanquet attributes it to the latter cause. He is somewhat obsessed by his job; vain and fruitless is any attempt to deflect him from consistently bitter and suspicious thoughts and anticipations. Perhaps they are justified. Sir Francis Bingham is going down to Munich to-morrow, in order to stir up the Italians, but he himself estimates that already sufficient guns and war material

have been destroyed to make it impossible for Germany to take the field again for many years. General Nollet, the superman of the Inter-Allied Disarmament Commission, does not share this opinion, or it may be that he is too loyal to President Poincaré to admit it.

December 8th, 1920.

George Curzon has wired asking D'A. to go to Brussels on Saturday next to represent the British Government on the Committee of Reparations. This is a complete upset of all our not effortless preparations for Christmas Trees and British conviviality. The French do not want the Committee to break up before a definite sum has been fixed for Germany's Reparation payments. The Germans are most anxious to send someone likely to prove a good advocate for their case. D'Abernon's view is that the financial position in Germany is extremely bad and that, if the French exact large payments in gold, bankruptcy, or something near it, will ensue. He thinks that the whole question of Reparations should be shelved for a year or more until the budget balances taxation with expenditure. D'A. leaves to-night, but before leaving we are convened to tea by the President.

The President's house is close to the Embassy in the Wilhelmstrasse, and on its far side there is an unexpectedly lovely old formal garden, framed with a wide avenue of big plane trees. Before the War this house used to belong to the Minister of the Imperial Household, and before that again it was the first Prince Bismarck's official residence.

Quite possibly we are asked, owing to a naïve eleventh-hour idea on the part of President Ebert, that D'A.'s sympathies may be warmed up by this little courtesy previous to his departure for the Brussels conference? No one was present but Frau Ebert and Dr. Simons (Minister for Foreign Affairs), and we are the first representatives of any enemy country to be invited. The President is a rough diamond, coarse and heavy, but one feels at once that he has a strong personality and is no mere figurehead. Frau Ebert is a hefty upstanding lady from Danzig, said to be the daughter of a saddler. Both are unused to social amenities, but the lack of current conventional insincerities gives to the better sort of Socialists a certain simplicity and directness that is akin to natural dignity. They do not strain to appear what they are not, and remain self-possessed, if rather reserved

and simple. It is unfortunate that I speak German so indifferently, because on this occasion neither French, Italian nor, of course, English were of any use. Fortunately D'Abernon is quite fluent in German.

The reception rooms in the President's house are large and well proportioned. They are hung with rather vivid crimson damask. I noticed antique gilt-framed Venetian mirrors and a marble console covered with Conversation groups in delicate Dresden china (*Meissen*, as it is always called in Germany.) It seemed somewhat incongruous to find a bullfrog President sitting in the midst of Dresden china, and I fancied that the ghosts of happier days must be flitting uneasily through the rooms.

Will the Republic last in Germany? It is a question we continually ask ourselves. Some people affirm that hardly anyone wants the Hohenzollerns back and that there is a net-work of Communists ready to rise and set up a predatory Soviet form of Government. Others say that Saxony and Bavaria show an orientation towards law and order, coupled with monarchical leanings such as prevail at Potsdam.

While at the President's I had quite a long talk with Dr. Simons about the Weimar Republic. He summed up by saying that neither a motto, nor a national song has yet been adopted. A new socialist composition had altogether failed to catch on as a national anthem, and *Wacht am Rhein* is too military to suit the present Government. I hinted, not without a twinkle, at the wide popularity of *Deutschland über Alles*, but about this he remained tactfully non-committal. The coat-of-arms adopted by the Socialist Government is, he said, the Hohenzollern eagle, *uncrowned*, but no motto has yet been selected for it. He spoke of his own motto and dwelt rather complacently (for a *soi-disant* Socialist) upon its having been in his family for several hundred years.

December 12th, 1920.

To-day's incident was a long visit from "Colonel" Dame Adelaide Livingstone, and a talk about the records of "The Prisoners and Graves Commission" and of deaths among the British prisoners of war in France and Belgium before the Armistice. She said that, when her notes are written up and published, it will be found that the percentage of men subjected to ill-treatment was much smaller than is generally believed, but that there had been three spots of darkest dye. Of these an

easy first was the Wittenberg Typhus Camp, followed by two others less generally known. It seems that in 1916, the Germans accused us, not altogether without reason, of employing prisoners near the firing line. Dame Adelaide said that two prisoners only were actually killed, but the Germans probably found it convenient to believe a much larger number. Anyway, reprisals on a vast scale were set in motion. Two thousand six hundred British prisoners were transferred to the Russo-Polish front and instructions were issued, which she assures me she has seen with her own eyes, stating that of these men five hundred were to receive "rigorous treatment". No records of the death of these men exist, but letters from eye-witnesses tell of neglect and cruelty. She mentioned especially a camp at Mittau. The men died in large numbers from cold, starvation, and ill-treatment and their bodies were simply poked away through holes in the ice. No record of their names or of the numbers on their discs was kept. Still worse was the fate of thousands of British prisoners in France and Belgium during the last months of the War. 25,000 were held behind the lines and treated like slaves. They were given practically no other food than crusts and a drink of coffee made from acorns. They died in enormous numbers, their deaths being mostly entered in the German records as due to "lung disease". . . . Dame Adelaide said the only extenuating circumstance was that food was not so much withheld as non-existent, certainly quite insufficient for adequately feeding their own Army. She told a curious story in connection with German records: A certain high and responsible German officer, with whom she was discussing War Graves, absolutely denied that any British prisoners were ever transferred to the Eastern front. Proofs of this are, however, in existence and were subsequently shown to him. Rightly or wrongly, Dame Adelaide believes that the officer *really was* in complete ignorance of the fact that these prisoners had been transferred from West to East. I rather question this, because nothing has impressed itself more upon me, during the few months I have been here, than the lack of frankness one meets with in Germans. Constantly I find myself up against it. Even in connection with mere trifles there is dissembling or concealment. It is more often a suppression of the truth than a direct lie. This indifference to truth pervades all classes. I meet it again and again, not only amongst dependants, but amongst educated people, and even amongst those who occupy influential positions.

BERLIN.

December 13th, 1920.

After two months of iron frost there has come at last a heavy fall of snow. It is a pretty sight to watch old-fashioned sleighs gliding smoothly and silently across the ice-blue Tiergarten. Usually the sledge is small and drawn by only one horse or pony. The horse is always covered with little tinkling bells and the harness is crowned by an immense *panache* of white horsehair, like the plume of a Life Guardsman's helmet, only much larger. Frequently the sleighs are painted scarlet or bright blue and the occupants, who are often smothered in furs, contrive to look picturesque and rather French *dix huitième siècle*.

Last night we went to a supper given by the Spanish Ambassador, preceded by a gala entertainment at the colossal new Scala Theatre. There must have been over a thousand people; all of whom seemed to belong to the *bourgeois* class. I record the evening because it brought me for the first time face to face with Kühlmann, who in England is generally believed to have been involved in the events that led up to the Great War. I had last seen him, good-looking, prosperous, rather aggressively dandified and complacent, in the summer of 1914, on the steps of the Ritz Hotel in Paris. Last night I hardly recognized him. War years have left their mark. He is aged, sobered, coarsened and thickened, yet in spite of all this he has improved. Whether or not he deserves the reputation of having encouraged the War party in Berlin I have no means of judging, but it is generally believed that he worked in this sense behind the back of Prince Lichnowsky. It is thought that he wrote private despatches to the German Government, telling them that England was sunk in sloth and luxury and had her hands full in Ireland; that either she would not "come in" with France, or that if she did, she would be so ill equipped as to be of very little use.

Such is the general belief, but opinions widely held are usually erroneous, more especially when connected with foreign affairs.

At the Scala, the Ambassador, to my regret, artfully manœuvred Kühlmann into another *loge*. We were a large party, spread over four boxes, but afterwards, while assembling for supper at the Adlon Hotel, Kühlmann approached resolutely and began to talk. Like most South Germans, he has culture and adaptability. There was little effort or *gêne* about this renewal of acquaintance, but of course conversation turned upon the present and the future rather than the past. He said that he himself

is now entirely outside politics, but that he knew and liked Dr. Simons (the present *Staats Secretär* for Foreign Affairs) who had worked under him when he was Chancellor. He thinks that an eventual monarchical revival under the Crown Prince's son is quite certain. Kühlmann's handsome first wife, whom I remember in England, hurled herself from a window during the War, and he has now married again. The new wife is a tiny Jewess, the only daughter and colossal heiress of Friedländer Fuld; she is the same little lady, who for a month was married to Jack Mitford, then left him and obtained a German divorce during the War. She is rather pretty, quick and clever in an ultra-modern, pseudo-artistic kind of way, and is said to be an intrigante and perhaps somewhat unbalanced and a-moral.¹ Their married life is believed to be unhappy and approaching dissolution.

¹ Shortly afterwards they were divorced, since when Frau von Kühlmann has been twice married, making a total of four husbands.

CHAPTER VIII

1921

BERLIN

February 3rd, 1921.

BERLIN.

Even more than the usual amount of water has flowed under the bridge since my last entry two and a half months ago. In December last D'Abernon received Foreign Office instructions to attend, as Senior Delegate for England, at the Brussels Congress of Foreign Experts on Reparations. At the conference some useful spade work appears to have been done, and what was more difficult—and perhaps no less important—relatively decent human relations were established between French and Germans, largely owing to D'Abernon's influence and example.

The Supreme Council met in Paris on January 24th, and I joined D'A. there at the Ritz Hotel. After endless difficulties and discussions, a figure for Reparations was reluctantly agreed to by the French. From their point of view, the figure is too low, and from Lloyd George's point of view it is too high. D'A. considers that the only good thing about the agreement is that the French and English still hold together. Anyhow, the arrangement was hailed in Berlin with a unanimous howl of objugation. D'A.'s philosophy attributes this to its being only imperfectly understood.

We returned to face the music, which has gone on swelling to a full orchestra ever since, and during this last fortnight public and private utterances have risen to a high-water mark of bitterness. The Prussian elections are imminent, which partly accounts for Dr. Simons making wild speeches that fan the flames. I suppose such speeches are intended strictly for home consumption. They certainly do not help Germany abroad.

Socially things are more unpleasant than at any time since we came. We had laid the foundations of normal human relations, but the flood of bad feeling stirred by the decision of the Supreme Council has swept all these bridges away: so much so that two large dinners and a dance we have given had to be composed exclusively of the *Corps Diplomatique* and the Inter-Allied Disarmament Missions and their wives. I decided that

it was inexpedient to invite Germans just now and expose the Embassy to possible discourtesy by giving them an opportunity to decline civilities.

General Niell Malcolm is at the head of a special and rather mysterious mission which will be dissolved next month and which is known as the Mission for Repatriation of Russian Prisoners of War. It is composed of an able staff of junior officers, all of whom speak German fluently. Together with their unconventional chief, they seem to have ranged outside nominal duties and have been indefatigable in getting into touch with young Germans. Now their newly made friends, chiefly Prussians of the Junker class (who have largely lived upon their hospitality during recent months) turn the cold shoulder, especially in public places. Apparently these youths continue ready and even anxious to associate with them in obscure restaurants where there is little danger of being observed by relations or by their superior officers. Prussian feelings and standards of behaviour are certainly a dark forest to the uninitiated.

Since the decision of the Supreme Council in Paris, even the Auswärtiges Amt officials are chilly. Frau Simons had her last diplomatic reception of the season yesterday and although D'Abernon would not go himself he thought it better that this Embassy should not make itself conspicuous by our both staying away. A glacial reception awaited me, but I carried things through with a high hand, holding Frau Simons in conversation for a considerable time and then turning to talk lightly with other people. It is a great mistake to look apologetic and "tails down" as do all the members of the Military Missions. But when this teapot comedy was at an end, and I could steal back to my room, I felt estranged, discouraged, resentful and filled with an increasing distaste for all my social duties here.

. . . Ah! sometimes I remember days of old,
When friendship seemed not so far to seek,
When all the world, and I, seemed much less cold,
And at the rainbow's foot lay surely gold,
And hope was strong, and life itself not weak . . .

February 24th, 1921.

BERLIN.

To-morrow, February 25th, we start for the next Conference in London. Monsieur Laurent, the French Ambassador, accompanies us. We fancy, somehow, that this is at his own and not at the Quai D'Orsay's suggestion? He takes the genial view,

that if a firm Allied front is presented, the German Delegation will double up and become *souple comme un gant*.

Prince Pless and Princess "Titi" Thurn and Taxis (probably just because of the tidal wave of animosity) came to-day to see me. Pless is about to divorce poor, feather-headed Daisy, or rather he is allowing her to divorce him, and is making (so Titi tells me) a fair and even generous settlement.

It is said that he would like Germany to dissolve into federal states, as before 1870, and that he cherishes the illusion that he would then become a reigning prince in Upper Silesia. The date of the Silesian plebiscite is not yet fixed, and the result is uncertain. Conflicts are perennial in Silesia between Poles and Germans. The French, in their pro-Polish dealings, betray a cynical indifference to the most elementary principles of equity, but for once they have been overborne. The Italians and English having carried a fairplay proposal for holding the elections all in one day.

Later.

No less than eighteen people, Germans and neutrals, came in unexpectedly for tea this evening. This and many floral tributes pouring in just now—have surprised and touched me. But I find this life of endless representation complicated by packing and travelling, and a complete dearth of leisure not merely antipathetic but terribly exhausting.

LONDON,

FOLEY HOUSE.

February 27th, 1921.

We returned to Foley House ¹ yesterday morning, and D'Abernon commenced liaison work at the Foreign Office and at the Savoy Hotel (where the German Delegation is lodged) the moment he arrived. Shoals of letters and invitations are here, including one from Lloyd George asking us to motor down to Chequers to-day, Sunday, to meet Foch and Briand at luncheon. The invitation is tempting, but D'A. travels alone. I am completely worn out; so over-tired that I have a nervous nettle-rash all over my face and chest and can make no appearance in public until it subsides.

Amongst my letters I found one from Violet Cecil, announcing

¹ Eighteenth-century Foley House, Portland Place, with its forecourt of turf and poplars, was our town house until acquired and demolished by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

her marriage to Lord Milner. It was written some days ago and the marriage appeared in yesterday evening's papers. Marriages between people no longer young seem to me rather inexplicable, but this one, between two singular and gifted human beings, may be wiser than at first sight it appears. Alfred Milner is younger than his years and Violet's appreciation and devotion date as far back as the anxious Mafeking months that she passed at Groote Schurr in 1899 and 1900. After telling of her marriage she adds that Lloyd George is quite unshaken by the attacks upon him and by Lord Cecil's defection, and that the only person in the world whom he fears is Winston Churchill. Perhaps this is because some of Winston's characteristics are similar to his own? Ages ago I made a wager at long odds with "Hotspur" Lord Percy—a rare spirit and a beloved friend—that Winston (a brother Hooligan¹) would one day be Prime Minister. His star suffers frequent and semi-total eclipse, but I still think it will rise at length supreme. He is one of those rare people who seem to gather fresh strength from every reverse. In spite of certain shortcomings, his personality is attractive and winning. He has amazing talent, spirit and vitality, is full of expedients for every situation, and although he has sometimes shown a lack of judgment he is endowed with rare gifts of imagination and vision. On the human side he is kindly and good-natured, so long as people do not stand directly in his path. A gift for painting and sensitiveness to beauty, not only in nature but in women, are qualities which serve him well, more especially as they are coupled with a sense of humour that is witty and mischievous but never malignant or mean.

March 8th, 1921.

The week of the London Conference is over, after much *va et vient*, *poste et riposte*, etc., and never for one moment any prospect of agreement. Yet I fancy that few people in England are at all satisfied with the decision to exercise "Sanctions". The Cabinet have reluctantly agreed to them under pressure from

¹ The Hooligans were a free-lance party in the House of Commons at the turn of the century. Their activities were more social than political. Winston Churchill and Hugh Cecil occasionally acted together, but as a group there was too much disagreement for any consistent common action. Other members of the group were Lord Percy (subsequently Under-Secretary of State for India and for Foreign Affairs) and Sir Ian Malcolm.

the French. France cares for francs more than for fair play and for the Rhine more than for francs.

There was a big farewell dinner given by the Curzons in Carlton House Terrace last night, for the members of the Conference. Everything was extremely well done and the house looked beautiful. Grace Curzon has a forthcoming American side that is very attractive, and declared frankly and indiscriminately to all and sundry that the boiler having burst an hour ago and the kitchen being now a steaming lake, one must be indulgent towards the dinner. It was, none the less, quite excellent. She looked well, dressed in black satin liberally plastered with diamonds. At dinner I found myself between St. Aulaire, the new French Ambassador, and Lloyd George. St. Aulaire is not an eagle. Lloyd George came in late, after making a statement about the position in the House of Commons. It followed on his valedictory speech, at the Conference, to Dr. Simons, but he did not seem at all exhausted. I found him no less keen and lively than usual—he never says a dull or an obvious thing and is very spontaneous and quick at the uptake. He spoke perfunctorily of Berlin and of the Conference and then glided on to what interests him a great deal more, complacent retrospection over his long and memorable term of office. He confessed to feeling a little weary and over-tasked and there was a *nuance* of doubt and misgiving about his own political future. It culminated somewhat irrelevantly in an allusion to Julius Caesar and to the Greek and Roman custom of putting an end to one's life when age and disability pressed down! After dinner, I talked alternately with Foch, Austen Chamberlain, General Gouraud, Sir Henry Wilson and Mr. Herbert Fisher, who is a very genuine, humorous, and stimulating old friend. Baroness Moncheur, the American wife of the first Belgian Ambassador, looked handsome in rose colour with a becoming coronet of prematurely white hair. I wore sea-green *crêpe-de-chine*, freely fringed and embroidered with shimmering crystal drops. It was a Paris frock, selected because of a suggestion of classic simplicity in its lines and also because of its amusing name of "*Aphrodite en larmes*".

Later : March 8th, 1921.

To-day we had luncheon with Victoria Bullock¹ to meet

¹Lady Victoria Primrose had married Captain Malcolm Bullock while still at the British Embassy in Paris.

Foch and Weygand. Both were in tearing spirits over the result, or rather the complete breakdown of the Conference. It was followed by the French Occupation at 6 a.m. this morning of the three advanced Rhine towns. There were no guests but ourselves, and everyone talked freely and easily. Lately I have learned that it is an error to attribute to President Wilson the decision not to advance into Germany in November 1918. To-day Foch said that it was he himself who drew up the terms of the Armistice. The Germans accepted them and subscribed to everything, and Foch said that in his judgment this left no excuse for sacrificing more lives by pushing on into Germany. Perhaps it looks somewhat different to-day.

Foch and Weygand are as united as Castor and Pollux. They have worked more or less together since August 1914 and are devoted to one another. Weygand appears to have a delightful character. With a great record of achievements behind him he remains unassuming, modest and open minded. They both lingered on after luncheon, evidently enjoying a tiny party after all the interminable and exhausting banquets. Our host, Malcolm Bullock, said little but was pleasant and sympathetic. He never blunders. Victoria was bright and animated; she speaks French unusually well and kept the shuttle-cock flying. D'A. and Weygand are real friends. They learnt to appreciate one another last autumn, when straining to stem the Bolshevik advance on Warsaw, and the fact that D'A. has tried to reduce the severity of the demands dictated to Germany has not been misunderstood or resented by Weygand. Indeed, Briand also would have been only too glad to accept a compromise. D'Abernon says that Simons showed lack of judgment at the Conference by putting forward quite inadequate proposals.

March 10th, 1921.

We dined last night with Edgar's old friends, the Asquiths, in Bedford Square, meeting Dick and Moyra Cavendish, Mr. Keynes of financial fame, Lord Reading and Lord Buckmaster. On the lighter side were lovely Laura Lovat and Asquith's daughter by his first wife, Violet Bonham-Carter.

To-day we were "commanded" to luncheon at Buckingham Palace. No one else was present, only the King, the Queen and Princess Mary. The main subject of conversation was Germany, to which, however, D'A. contributed very little, the talk being entirely dominated by the King. The Queen's hair is

now quite white. It waves crisply and has a blue shade very becoming to her beautiful complexion. She was dressed in rather vivid violet velvet, and as the years go by she becomes increasingly handsome and regal. Princess Mary has shy, girlish manners. She has inherited the Queen's fresh colouring and this suffices to make her pretty, although she is not tall like her mother and will never achieve the Queen's really remarkable poise and "presence".

We entered Buckingham Palace by a side door and were shunted up a side staircase into a small anteroom, the walls of which were covered by cases containing Indian arms, jewelled aigrettes, and what one reverently assumes to be priceless Oriental treasures. The private dining-room opens out of this anteroom and is in the angle of the Palace overlooking the Mall. It is decorated with panels painted in imitation of the Chinese, and the King said they came from George IV's Pavilion Palace at Brighton. Buckingham Palace contains so many rare and beautiful things that to me it seemed strange that the King and Queen should receive, even informally, in these rather ordinary, unpleasing little rooms.

Admiral Beatty and Lady Beatty have taken Esher Place at one hundred guineas a week until late September. They will be good tenants and we are fortunate in having let Esher so well in these hard times, but I shall miss not being able to go there when we are home on leave. So much of oneself has gone into the planning of the grounds, the garden-theatre, green walks, grass steps and vistas. *Partir c'est mourir un peu — c'est mourir à ce qu'on aime . . .* and then a home that has once been inhabited by strangers is never quite the same unique half-hallowed place again.

To me London is not agreeable in summer. It is metallic, glittering, flashy, noisy, external. In the country things may be dull, but at least country-people are relatively kind and sincere. Often I grow weary of the smart shallowness and grudging ill-nature of London people.

"La Société! La Société! Comme elle rend le cœur dur et l'esprit frivole. Comme elle fait vivre pour ce que l'on dira de vous."

So wrote Madame de Staël a hundred years ago and Anatole France is not less emphatic in this generation: "Si tout à coup la société se retournait comme un gant et qu'on en vit le dedans, nous tomberions tous évanouis de dégoût et d'effroi."

And yet, such is the inconsistency of human nature, that one could not, for long, be content to live alone. A fortnight of complete solitude is my limit:

BERLIN.

May 10th, 1921.

D'Abernon returned yesterday from the Meeting of the Supreme Council at Lympne and in London. The Committee on Reparations had to frame and to transmit the substance of the Ultimatum to the German Government and it was summoned for this purpose at a few hours' notice from Paris. Sir John Bradbury was very indignant at the *sans façon* treatment "Reparations" received, and made a gesture of resignation. (Perhaps not intending it to be taken seriously.) D'A. is somewhat exhausted by the intensive work of the Conference, by the journey, by toothache and by being besieged before he crossed the threshold of the Embassy by Cabinet makers followed by Press representatives, so that he did not get upstairs to his room until three hours after he arrived.

The general anticipation is that the Reichstag will vote acceptance of the Ultimatum. The French cannot conceal their resentment and vexation at being thus prevented from going in to occupy the Ruhr. That this has been avoided is due to Lloyd George and D'A.

BERLIN.

May 11th, 1921.

A big dinner of thirty-six took place at the French Embassy last night. I was led in by the Ambassador, Monsieur Charles Laurent. An aggravation of his ill-humour, occasioned by the Ruhr checkmate (which he attributes entirely to England and largely to D'A.) was that he was suffering from what he graphically described as *une gencivite*. Consequently he was more than a little sententious, disjointed and difficult. However, I turned upon him an obstinately bland and smiling countenance and studiously avoided politics. After dinner there was a ball and dancing took place in an atmosphere suggestive of an unventilated Hammam. The ballroom looks on to the Pariser Platz and it was impossible to raise the blinds or to open the windows on account of the angry crowds that had assembled outside. To do the Laurents justice, they could not have foreseen, when they sent out invitations, that just this night would be the night when the Reichstag would be sitting late to vote on the

tremendous issue of the Reparations Ultimatum *versus* the French occupation of the Ruhr, but everyone felt that it was *de mauvais goût* that there should be a fête to-night and wondered why some excuse had not been found for postponing it.

May 12th, 1921.

BERLIN.

The acceptance of the Ultimatum was carried last night by a majority of forty-two. Wirth, late Minister of Finance, is to be Chancellor and Secretary for Foreign Affairs. D'A. rather likes him and believes him to be courageous and sincere.

June 3rd, 1921.

BERLIN.

Many interesting things have happened, yet my aversion to scribbling increases.

We saw much of the Lichnowsky's a week or two back. He—with his queer-shaped skull and raucous voice, has hardly changed since he was Ambassador in London, while she has distinctly improved, is less *poseuse*, less eccentric and seems to have developed wider interests. Incidentally a prolonged Gastin cure has reduced her always handsome face and figure to proportions more in conformity with prevailing fashions. They have acquired a pleasing secluded house off the Luferufer. The other day we had luncheon with them, meeting, among other stalwarts of the *Ancien Régime*, Rosen, the lately appointed Foreign Minister. He is of Jewish origin and proportionately cosmopolitan. This is very unlike other Germans who always seem to belong to some stratum that advanced Western civilization has barely touched—still less penetrated. Prussians, more especially, appear to be incapable of assimilating, even if it came to them, the type of culture and of ideas and manners that prevail in London, Rome, Paris or New York. Probably this is accentuated by the War and by financial stringency which have confined them for seven years in Germany. Rosen is reputed to be a marvellous Persian scholar; in his youth he was a dragoman at Baghdad. His mind, as far as one can see, belongs to the reservoir category, for though he said several interesting things, they had to be laboriously dived for by the assembled company, some of whom rescued from the depths quite a number of pearls.

Lichnowsky always speaks affectionately of London and both he and Mechtilde have a real liking for everything that is

English. It is his idiosyncrasy to sit silent for a long time and then to explode suddenly into frank, unpremeditated outpourings upon all and sundry. Events in England in August 1914 certainly vindicated the opinion he ventured to put forward in Berlin earlier in the year which so greatly displeased the Kaiser and the War Party. We took the Lichnowskys to the play one night and asked them to select the piece. They were quite resolved it should be "Misalliance" by Bernard Shaw. In German it seemed a wretched play, but B. S. had written them up during the War, a fact forgotten by us but not by them.

At the beginning of *Wunderschönen Monat-Mai* I went down for a few days to Dresden, escorted by our eccentric honorary *attaché*, Hugh Burnaby. We had divine weather. The museums and the opera are marvellous, but my companion greatly preferred the surrounding hills and "the open road". Music, *Meissen* and the Art galleries had no message for him.

June 4th, 1921.

Last night, in honour of the King's birthday, we gave a large dinner for all the representative English people on the Inter-Allied Commission of Control and it was followed by a lively little dance. Roses flower earlier here than in England, so it was possible to have a Heliogabalus feast of all the most perfumed and old-fashioned roses. In the dining-room the Empire gold plate was filled with red ones and in the white and yellow ball-room every available space was garlanded with pink "American Pillar". The Embassy, helped out as it now is by our own pictures, tapestry and oriental carpets, looks really rather well.

June 4th, 1921.

Amongst the guests last night were two English barristers who had come up from the trial of the "War Criminals" now proceeding in Leipzig. They think the trial is conducted as fairly as can be expected, but that the sentences are too light; also, that the explanation of this is that those arraigned are men who were merely the tools of others more highly placed. This makes it difficult to inflict adequate sentences, since those on trial are not those really responsible. If the public here read the reports of the trial (which they don't) it would do much to open their eyes as to the conduct of the war, but nothing I fear will ever do that. "War is war" is the unvarying German answer to every suggestion of "frightfulness", and the doctrines

of Treitschke and Bernhardi are even to-day accepted like the decalogue. *A propos* of the English witnesses at Leipzig, these barristers declare that it was quite impossible to keep them sober.

June 10th, 1921.

We are organizing a tennis tournament. It is to take place in a week's time. We and the Naval Commission have got five courts reserved for our use in Wexstrasse. There is a pretty country club in Grünewald, where the "Corpse" (as we have christened the *Corps Diplomatique*) used to play before the War, but no one representing enemy powers is invited to play there now. Even the Golf Club has lately withdrawn its privileges from the officers of the Inter-Allied Commission. Apparently this is a studied retort to the attitude of English golf clubs towards Germans. With the thermometer registering 80° Fahrenheit, it is hard on the many members of the Commission of Control to have no alternative to that of treading the pavement of this asphalt city for exercise. However, D'A. thinks the new rule will presently be rescinded, if only because the Club badly needs subscriptions, and meanwhile he and the members of the Embassy continue to play there.

Yesterday we availed ourselves of an invitation from members of the Government to inspect the Schloss and the little Mon Bijou Palace. This last contains the Hohenzollern collection of family pictures and furniture and is no longer open to the public. I found the much abused Schloss more attractive than is its reputation. The rooms decorated by the Kaiser are ostentatious and overdone, but there are others, small ones in the old part of the Palace, with seventeenth-century marqueterie coats-of-arms, and old angle chimney-pieces that are quite interesting. The contents of the Kunst Gewerbe Museum are now being brought to the Schloss and the Government are quickly converting it into a museum so as to save it from being taken over by the Socialists and turned into community dwellings. Amongst the *objets d'art* now being installed there are many first-rate things, especially in tapestry, oriental carpets, and china. Of the pictures already *in situ*, I did not dislike some rather hard definite portraits painted here in the eighteenth century by a French artist, Antoine Pesne, whom Frederick the Great appointed as his Court painter having bribed or beguiled him to Sans Souci, together with Voltaire, de Catt and so many others. Pesne died in Berlin in 1757.

MEMORANDA ON GERMANY AND GERMANS WRITTEN IN 1922

The Germans say, not without truth, that no country has, in modern times, been dismembered like Germany. Her territory has been cut off not only in one place—as when France lost Alsace-Lorraine in 1870—but in three or four places, and last year in 1921, Upper Silesia was still further dismembered, and this in violation of the referendum, although (notwithstanding foreign propaganda) sixty per cent. of the population voted to remain German. As a result of this fresh dismemberment, the most valuable part of Silesia, that containing the rich iron ore deposits, has been allotted to Poland.

To this must be added the loss of all her Colonies, together with the fact that the Army of Occupation on the Rhine, in one year, costs Germany more money than did her whole army and fleet per annum before the War.

Against this the Allies cannot but remember and proclaim that the War and the gigantic losses it entailed was provoked, not by them, but by Germany (and Austria), so that what Germany laments to-day has come about entirely by her own fault. Unfortunately, the German people are too ill-informed to understand this, and moreover it was their Ministers and War Lords, not the common people, who laboriously brought Sir Edward Grey's peace efforts to nothing. A sense of justice compels one to admit that from the point of view of the bulk of the people there is ground for complaint; and, even if it were not so, it is a German peculiarity to magnify national, no less than personal, grievances. Temperamentally the Teuton appears unable to apprehend that in order to form an impartial judgment every question should be examined from two sides. A consequence of this limitation is that whenever their national or personal interests suffer (even when this is obviously the result of their own policy or conduct), the Germans invariably regard themselves as victims and martyrs.

Religion, or rather the lack of it, is a negative factor, but one which has many repercussions. Amongst the majority of every class—excluding the Catholics—there is a complete absence of any religious creed; Germany is very largely a land of Free-

thinkers. Authors and landowners, professors, diplomats and politicians, farmers and tradesmen, young and old, male and female, regard Christianity as a moribund survival of the Dark Ages. They do not urge or obtrude their point of view; indeed it is so universally accepted that it has ceased to be a subject deserving discussion. Largely owing to this complete lack of spiritual beliefs and values, there is a widespread conviction that money, strength, authority and power are the only things worth having. These are the things for which, whether as individuals or as a nation, they are ready to make every sacrifice.

The absence of Christian, and even of Platonic, ideals may account for the fact that, when and where there is or has been an increase of wealth, it seems to be not infrequently accompanied by a decline of ethical standards and a decrease of all sense of personal responsibility.

Yet, when all is said and done, Germans are possessed of many virile and outstanding qualities. Amongst all nations they perhaps are the most uncompromisingly masculine. They have inexhaustible energy, confidence, perseverance, tenacity and courage; and on the intellectual side they are endowed with an effortless thoroughness and *gründlichkeit* which enables them to undertake—in the most diverse spheres—exacting and difficult tasks, and to carry them through to a successful conclusion.

On the domestic side, parents are strict disciplinarians, yet they will make great sacrifices for their children, and even for more distant relations. They are amongst themselves (as far as I can judge) considerate and loyal friends provided there is no rivalry or conflict of ambition. Superficially, the majority seem to be practical and matter-of-fact, but they are curious and inquisitive about foreign ways, beliefs and customs. Inwardly many are animated and misguided by a destructive Nietzschean philosophy—a queer mix up of idealism and credulity. Indeed, strange bed-fellows lie hidden in the German soul, and deep unplumbed wells of mysticism may sometimes be concealed by brutal impulses and instincts. Yet they possess great qualities, and these by no means exclude those lesser ones that contribute so materially towards making every day life pleasant and agreeable. The young are naturally *fröhlich*; they enjoy physical activities and are easily amused.

In short, while lacking in penetration, finesse and many of the gentle, ingratiating characteristics of other nations, Germany's

inhabitants are, for the most part, healthy, strong, serious, industrious people—a people that Europe will always have to reckon with, even though to-day they are cowed and subdued, their war-like propensities camouflaged but not for a moment extinguished.

CHAPTER IX

1923

BERLIN

The terms imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles excluded the possibility of any revival of provincial separatism. The Allies had demanded large sums as reparations. Germany maintained that she was incapable of paying these sums, yet Poincaré insisted upon punctual payment. In 1922 Germany defaulted, and in January 1923 Poincaré, having failed to obtain satisfaction, ordered French troops to occupy the Ruhr, Germany's richest industrial area. They were met by organized passive resistance.

October 22nd, 1922.

It is now fifteen months since my last entry, but undeterred by this formidable hiatus, very imperfectly filled by the foregoing sketch of German peculiarities, I will scribble some record of a visit to Schloss Charlottenburg, a wing of which is an institution established to assist cripples, 95 per cent. of whom are war cripples. It was instituted by the State (I believe early in 1918) and the Medezinrat estimates that in Berlin alone there are no less than 8,000 war cripples and of these, he affirms that 95 per cent. are now able to earn their own living. Ingenious appliances are invented to meet the needs of the men in accordance with their special trade. The clerk, the agricultural labourer, the industrial worker, each has an artificial leg, arm or hand, specially designed and adapted not only to suit him individually but also to facilitate his particular trade or occupation.

A strong point of this orthopædic centre is the complete absence of red tape. On production of an identity card a file is consulted for verification, and at once the patient's limb is treated or his mechanical appliance is overhauled and put in order. Over fifty specially trained war cripples are continually employed in the workshops where the appliances are made or rectified and these shops occupy a large part of the building. The whole of the arrangements are eminently practical and economical. A house surgeon is always at hand and every need is attended to with a minimum of delay. Appliances are not

sent round the country to a variety of special manufacturers—the slow, expensive procedure that maintains in England.

Sunday, January 14th, 1923.

To-day was appointed to be observed as a day of National Mourning for the French occupation of the Ruhr. I was curious to see the Mass meeting in front of the Reichstag and went out on foot at 1 o'clock with two Secretaries from the Chancery (Philip Broadmead and Sir Richard Rees). Pariser Platz and the streets leading to the French Embassy were closed to the public and guarded by rows of mounted police, and no one was allowed through without a special pass. Beyond the Brandenburger Thor the crowd was pretty dense but quiet and well behaved, and for several hours greatly enjoyed itself listening to speeches and singing at intervals "*Deutschland über Alles*" and "*Eine feste Burg ist Unser Gott*", etc. At about 1.30 p.m. the fringe of the crowd began to disperse, but we hear that the more contumacious part of it, not being able to approach the French Embassy in Pariser Platz and shout insults as it had hoped, surrounded instead the quarters of the Inter-Allied Military Mission and remained there angry and stubborn until after midnight. An unpleasant occurrence, betraying the uncertain temper of the crowd, overtook Mrs. Robbins, the handsome wife of the First Secretary of the American Embassy. The origin of her forebears is a trifle mixed. Her grandmother was German, her father a Belgian settled in the Argentine and her mother an Argentine. She is popular among the young people here, full of life and apparently richly endowed with dollars. She had a luncheon party in their flat to witness the demonstration. The windows look over the Tiergarten towards the Reichstag, and rather unwisely the Robbins and their guests all went out on to the balcony as the crowd began to move away. The German residents in the house, which is let out in apartments, treated the demonstration with religious solemnity and refrained from going out as mere sightseers on to the balconies, consequently she and her party were rather conspicuous. We could not help observing them and waved as we walked back towards the Brandenburger Thor. Immediately after we had passed someone in the crowd mistook them for French people and started the idea that Mrs. Robbins was *spitting* on the people under the balcony! There was a nasty rush and some of the hot-heads got into the house

and penetrated into the flat so that the Robbins, and the German guests that were with them, had to come out and protest. Mrs. Robbins was supported by the German banker Tettelmann and by Count Pejatschewick (whom I knew when he was attached to the Austrian Embassy in London) and thanks to German words so glibly spoken the insurgents accepted the explanation and took their leave saying they had no idea that Mrs. Robbins and her guests were German, they had thought they were French, and so ended what might have developed into another of the frequently recurring "incidents."

GOLF CLUB HOTEL, OBERHOF,
THURINGER WALD.

January 17th, 1923.

I came here to-day, alone with my maid, owing to obstinate laryngitis which a throat specialist affirmed would yield to nothing short of absolute dumbness assisted by mountain air. Our sleigh climbed up 800 metres, and when we reached the Thuringian summit, we found a wide landscape spreading out before us very much like a Swiss Christmas card, including a large modern hotel in the foreground. This year the inmates are mostly Jews and *Schieber*. Ski-ing is practised in front of the windows, and is amusing. The women all wear knicker-bockers, quite regardless of their age or outline. The knicker-bockers do not appear to have been made for the occasion but to be the discarded property of the broadest male relation. The ensemble is somewhat incongruously completed by a rainbow sweater, or even, during the sunny hours, by a vivid pink satin blouse.

January 19th, 1923.

The millionaire potentate, Hugo Stinnes, and his family are residents in the hotel. I had never seen him before although, when in Berlin, he lives at the Adlon Hotel, which is next door to the Embassy. Here, as elsewhere, he avoids everyone, excepting those with whom he has business, and consorts exclusively with his wife and children. He comes down to meals only when everyone else has gone. He looks less saturnine than his photographs, but seems to be intensely preoccupied. People constantly arrive by train to have a few words with him, and most of his day is spent in telephoning. The passive resistance of the Ruhr is engineered by him and his principal diversion is to

elude questions and conversations with members of the Government in Berlin, and more particularly he disliked and always avoided Rathenau.¹ Incidentally he owns this hotel together with most other big enterprises in Germany. The hotel was originally built for a golf-house by the Duke of Albany's son, the Duke of Coburg. While at Eton, a diffident shy boy, he used to spend the holidays with his mother and sister, Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, now at Claremont. We saw them frequently, Claremont being quite close to Esher Place, but after the Duchess of Albany accepted for him the Grand Duchy of Coburg previously belonging to his uncle, better known as the Duke of Edinburgh, he left Eton and his education was completed in Germany.

January 21st, 1923.

I am back in Berlin, and had an interesting talk at dinner last night with Prince Lichnowsky. He would like to be re-employed by the Foreign Office, but is doubtful if he ever will be. He said it was not the case that there was a large war party in Germany in 1914. It was only General von Moltke and a small Potsdam military clique that wanted to precipitate war, and this because of a growing fear of Russia. He said it was not true that Tirpitz had urged on the war, that as a matter of fact he had opposed it, not wanting to risk the new Navy prematurely. Lichnowsky also spoke of Kühlmann, and repeated what I have often been told, that he also should be exonerated from the accusation of having helped to hurry on the war. Nor is it true, according to Lichnowsky, that Kühlmann informed the German Government that England was unlikely, unwilling and wellnigh incapable of taking part in war should it be precipitated. Kühlmann's services had been extremely valuable in connection with the Baghdad railway concessions and indeed for all questions connected with Balkan economic expansion, he having been born and brought up in the Levant, not far from Constantinople. According to Lichnowsky, Kühlmann liked to pose as "*Vice-Ambassadeur*" and although very adroit "was not a gentleman", nor was he "*en relation*" either with the Court or with the Junker members of the war party, and therefore how could he have corresponded with them? It was quite untrue that he wrote privately to the German Foreign Office behind his (Lichnowsky's) back. This is what Lichnowsky related . . . but where and

¹ Rathenau had been assassinated the previous June. See Appendix I.

what is Truth? Not many days ago when I was sitting alone with Mechtilde she admitted that Lichnowsky himself had known or foreseen in June 1914 that there would be war; she said that if he had "thrown at their feet" his resignation, war might have been averted or at least his resignation would have "opened their eyes" (I did not myself quite see that it would have changed anything). She then added that Lichnowsky always "drifted" and was incapable, under any circumstances, of taking action but that in political matters he invariably saw prophetically what loomed ahead. Incidentally she alluded to their unhappy married life, speaking of it with good sense and good feeling. She said that it was just that they two were like oil and water and that he could never understand her nor share her enthusiasm for artistic and literary interests and pursuits. She is a lonely unhappy woman, but I do not believe they will go asunder now. The difficult years are past; the years when youth looks for happiness as for a birthright. When introspection and bright expectations recede life becomes easier and outside interests multiply.

February 1st, 1923.

To-day is the anniversary of our triumphant fancy dress ball last year. This year there is so much ill feeling abroad that it would not have been possible to have one. The cordon round the Ruhr is complete, and also the complete disorganization of the train service. The Warsaw express has stopped running, nor is there any through train to the west. All the uphill reconstruction and reconciliation progress, made during the three years since we came here, seems to have been swept away at a stroke and the bitterness and ill-feeling are indescribable, more especially against the French. The Chancellor, Cuno, said to-day to D'Abernon:

"At all events Poincaré has succeeded in uniting Germany which is more than any of us have ever been able to do." The Government maintain that a kind of barrage of successive strikes can be kept up indefinitely, but D'Abernon does not believe this is possible. The Belgian Minister appears to be very uneasy and half-hearted about the Ruhr. Members of the French Embassy and the Belgian Legation and, of course, the officers of the French and Belgian Military Missions are no longer able to dine in public restaurants. The waiters tell them quite civilly that they cannot be served. Passive resistance goes still further,

for when Comtesse della Faille ¹ sent one of her German servants yesterday to the chemist to get some aspirin, he was told that unfortunately nothing could be sold for the Belgian Legation. Marion Goldschmidt Rothschild, who is half German by birth, and wholly German by marriage, was walking in the Tiergarten yesterday, talking fluent French to a cosmopolitan companion, when a man came up behind her and smartly boxed her ears. As she has imminent expectations, obvious to any but Teuton eyes, the incident gave rise to some anxiety amongst her friends, but so far it has had no untoward result. Marion's stepfather, Baron Essen, the Swedish Minister, died this morning after a long and painful illness.

March 3rd, 1923.

Two months have elapsed since the French entered the Ruhr Gebiet and so far there is no sign, or only very faint signs, of a better state of mind in either the French or the Germans. Passive resistance has so far been more effective and more thorough than was anticipated. Absurd and gruesome things happen. An English private died here the other day after a long illness. He was attached to the Inter-Allied Commission and had begged that his body should be taken back to Cologne and interred there. Accordingly it was despatched fully addressed in a sealed coach. The seals excited the curiosity of the French and the coach was held up and subsequently *lost* in the limbo of the Ruhr. A graver disappearance to those concerned is that of a consignment of expensive stores, mainly brandy and whisky, etc., despatched from Cologne for the Military canteen in Berlin. The consignment has been traced to the Ruhr but has not been heard of since, so presumably the French are now revelling on £1,000 worth of illicit alcohol.

General von Kluck came to-day to luncheon. Others were Violet Bonham-Carter (who is staying with us), Major T. Breen (Press *attaché*), Sir Francis Bingham, and Colonel Stewart Roddie who speaks fluent German and through whom D'Abernon first came to know von Kluck. The General can only discourse in his native tongue and his one and only topic is the 1914 advance. This subject, after luncheon, was as usual treated exhaustively while we sat listening in an attentive circle. Von Kluck looks much younger than his seventy-five years and is apparently vigorous, although there dangles from his watch-chain a large

¹ Comtesse della Faille was the wife of the Belgian Minister.

piece of shrapnel extracted from one of his lungs after the battle of the Marne. He has an inscrutable Asiatic face, quite unlike a Prussian face, but long years of army life and training have set their iron seal upon him and the Prussian voice and manner have become ingrained. After discussing technical details, men and guns and ways and means, he spoke of the immense importance to an army of "morale" (he called it "psychologie") and of the swift recovery brought to a tired army by the news that big guns and heavy artillery are behind them. He enlarged upon the "demoniac" quality peculiar to all great generals; he thinks that Foch has this quality and more doubtfully General French. I infer that he thinks he has it himself. He said French was right to retreat behind the Marne and not to risk a battle with the exhausted Expeditionary Force, and that the advancing German army, never having been able to get to grips with the British troops (to whose courage and endurance he paid a high tribute), had disappointed him of a possible victory. I don't know if von Kluck knew that with the Expeditionary Force that went to Mons there were only 400 guns. This figure was given me by General Bingham, and as he had charge of the munition supply from 1914 until the end of the war, his figures may be taken as correct. Since the Armistice the control commission have accounted in Germany for no less than 33,537 guns, 497 millions of rifle ammunition and 87,000 machine-guns.

BERLIN.

March 7th, 1923.

After three months of being "At Home" every Saturday afternoon (from 4.30 to 7 p.m.) it is a sky-scraping joy to have had to-day my last *Jour* for this winter. Eighty or ninety people came, amongst them a good many Germans. Violet Bonham-Carter, who is staying with us, showed her usual acumen by steering instinctively towards the most pleasant and intelligent people. Besides the Lichnowskys, there came Prince and Princess Thurn and Taxis and others from social, professional, literary and official circles. Rather fortunately the French were conspicuously absent, for at the present time—since the occupation of the Ruhr—it is enough for a Frenchman to come into the room for all the Germans to line up, edge off and filter away, and the air becomes so charged on either side with suppressed hatred and spleen that the unfortunate *maîtresse de maison* is in purgatory.

*Letter from Lady Violet Bonham-Carter on
the French Occupation of the Ruhr*

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S HOUSE,
BRITISH ARMY OF THE RHINE.

Monday, March 19th, 1923.

DEAREST HELEN,

I have not had one second since I left you to write and thank you for my thrilling visit to you. Every minute of it was of *intense* interest—and I am more than grateful to you for having me and I do hope I didn't add an extra burden to your already heavily laden shoulders. I can't tell you what admiration I felt for your *masterly* performance on that most difficult stage. But you must have heard it a thousand times already. Day and night I was deafened by a Hallelujah Chorus of praise from English—Germans—neutrals—Afghans: and I felt it wasn't merely admiration (which could not well be withheld) but *real* feeling as well.

I arrived at the Godleys' Tuesday morning and found to my dismay that they had provisionally arranged for me to go round the Ruhr with De Bonival, *French* Commissioner at Cologne! I explained gently but firmly that I would as soon go round the Ruhr with a Frenchman as to Ireland with a Black and Tan or to Russia with Winston. No one would either speak to us—or even feed us! The plan was cancelled—and I left next morning for Düsseldorf where I joined my friend Mr. Voigt of the *Manchester Guardian*, and he and I have spent some very interesting days motoring about without any difficulties (except occasionally being held up for a few minutes by the French). The situation is a very extraordinary one. Everything the French touch they paralyse. Chimneys are ceasing to smoke—railways are stopping—coke-ovens, which take a month to light, damping down. They are terrified out of their wits and, though armed with machine-guns, tanks and every sort of ridiculous implement of war complain that the schoolchildren attack them—and they cover the walls with placards ordering civilians to walk in single file in the middle of the street with their hands *turned outwards* so that the palms are clearly visible! We went to Buer where the two officers were murdered and found tense, cowed, sullen resentment at the reprisals in which five *certainly* innocent people were shot.

I saw lots of miners and Trade Unionists who are determined.

to hold out to the bitter end. One man who had been robbed for resisting the war in 1914 said the French were making him see red for the first time. At Krupps, where I saw several of the directors (but, to my great disappointment, none of the works), they were confident of being able to hold out for a long time. They are still taking orders and they have large stocks of raw material. Only a hunger-blockade would break the people, and this they do not think the French would dare attempt. Fifty Italian scallywag miners have been introduced into one mine and are being protected by tanks and 16 soldiers to each worker! The German retort was to switch off the electric current and plunge that part of the mine in darkness. To this the French replied by darkening other parts which they control—" *Embêtement pour embêtement.*"

And so it goes on! A more futile and *frivolously* dangerous adventure one cannot imagine. I feel that at any moment an "incident" might lead to frightful bloodshed. *Both* sides are so frightened. In England the French would have been torn to bits by the women alone long before this—but the Germans are enduring—and also *I* feel a very *tired* people.

Forgive this endless letter. I shall never forget my divine visit to you nor cease to be grateful for it.

Ever yours, VIOLET.

No doubt there is truth in what Violet writes, but notwithstanding wonderful intellectual and verbal gifts her judgments on men and affairs are seldom dispassionate or impartial.

April, 1923.

ROME.

Weary of well-doing (or of well-endeavouring), I left Berlin for Vienna on March 24th. I had not been in Austria since the spring of 1914, when, at Sir Louis Mallet's invitation, I was in Vienna on the way to stay with him at the British Embassy in Constantinople. For this near Eastern trip my "Good Companions" were Maurice Baring, Lord Stanmore and the incomparable Etty Desborough. It is the fashion to say that Vienna has not really altered very much, but I found it sadly changed. Even medium sized houses, like that of the Clary d'Aldringens, have been divided up and are now inhabited either by Schieber or by antiquity dealers or wine merchants. The charming and formerly secluded garden of a large house, near what used to be

the British Embassy but is now the British Legation, has been thrown open to the public and people pass in and out, not through a gate, but through a wide, unsightly breach made in the wall. No attempt has been made to repair the wall or to introduce a gate. Another shock was to find the formal garden of Prince Liechtenstein's palace cut up into a number of allotments and potato patches. Socialists of course exult and indeed these few small gardens, now growing cabbages and potatoes may, at the present time, be necessary expedients, but who will deny that they advertise and proclaim a decline from the old standards of order and beauty?

From Constantinople I went on by sea via Greece to Venice, where I am in litigation with my landlord, who wants to raise the rent of the wonderfully beautiful, but cold and vast, apartment that I have occupied for twenty years in his palace next to Palazzo Foscari. It is the one in which Wagner lived when he first came to Venice and where he composed his immortal "Tristan und Isolde."

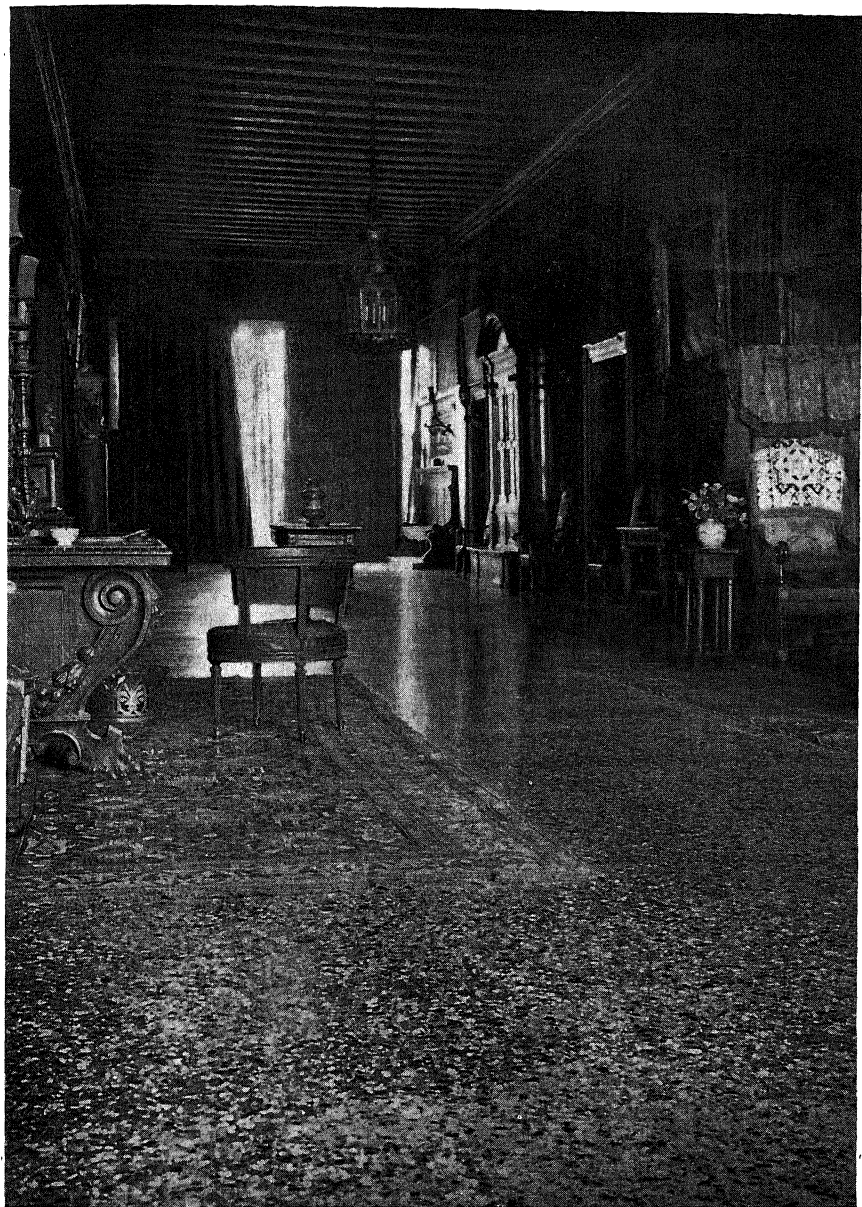
The weather was bright and glittering but too chilly for floating on the lagoons.

From Venice I pushed on to Rome and have been staying at the British Embassy, with Ronald and Sybil Graham, arriving a day too late for a meeting with Mussolini,¹ who dined with them the night before I came. It would have interested me to meet him, but unfortunately the fascination of Venice had induced me to postpone my journey for two days.

At the time of the March on Rome, Ronald Graham was the only foreign representative who had the foresight and the courage to come out strongly in favour of a change of Government. A fact which no doubt Mussolini has not forgotten.

The Grahams have done much to improve the Embassy and the house looks far better than it did in old days, but since I was last here the Office of Works have sold off a substantial piece of what used to be a lovely and typical Roman garden, and have erected extra Offices (Commercial, Military and Naval) at the end of it. The two classic alleys of ilex trees are much curtailed and only the immemorial Aurelian walls that run down one side of the garden remain intact and unchanged.

¹ Subsequently I had several opportunities of meeting Mussolini. I did not find him hectoring or aggressive but rather uneasy and reserved. What struck me most about him was what has been well said by Ernest Rénan, "*On garde toujours les marques de ses origines.*"



The Sala in Palazzo Giustiniani

The Grahams are much liked by the Italians—Ronald plays golf and bridge with them, and Sybil is a tall graceful creature, and very well dressed, which appeals to the innate artistic sense of Italians, but though she carries through her social duties extremely well, she regards them as wearisome *corvées*. She makes all the arrangements for a succession of large dinners and dances herself, and these manifold details, together with the late hours that entertaining entails, are a great strain on her rather precarious health.¹ . . . *Dans l'intimité* I find her sad and pre-occupied.

I see much of my old friend Annina Piccolomini. She lives outside Rome in the "Villa del Sole" on the Via Aurelia Antica. It is a small monastic dwelling surrounded by a flowerful walled garden. Beyond the garden she owns a stretch of undeveloped land from which is obtained a lovely and unusual view of St. Peter's. Annina's personality suggests that of an Italian "virago" (in the Renaissance sense of the word). She is beautiful, gifted, headstrong and tremendously alive and lives her own life, resolutely ignoring the animadversions of the frivolous, fashionable, social set in Rome. One day we made a long and delightful excursion to Don Gelasio Caetani's estate at Ninfa. He is away in America, Mussolini having chosen him to represent Italy as Ambassador in Washington. Ninfa is an ideal retreat for a hermit-prince. It is the centre of what still survives of an abandoned mediaeval settlement. The house, a remnant of an old fortress, now consists of only one large primitive sala to which have been added various small dependencies constructed out of the old Castello's ruins. It stands on the edge of a small deserted village long since completely abandoned owing to the prevalence of malaria. A crystal stream runs through clusters of green willows and past thickets of healing herbs and flowering fruit trees all planted by Don Gelasio, down to a little shining mirror of a lake in which are reflected, as in a dream city, the ruins of the old Village. The whole place might be the setting of a Hans Andersen fairy tale. From Ninfa, where we had an *al fresco* picnic, we motored on to Sermoneta to see the old Caetani Castello from which Gelasio's brother, the Duke of Sermoneta, takes his name. Sermoneta has turned his back upon Rome and lives in America. He is separated from his wife, the beautiful Vittoria Colonna, as is her descent and as was her historic name before her marriage.

¹ Lady Sybil Graham died in London, a few months after Sir Ronald was recalled from Rome.

The Castello has a rather dilapidated Renaissance interior and is perched high up right on the crest of the little town. In one of the upper rooms, painted round the cornice of a deeply recessed alcove, two half-effaced devices may still be deciphered. "*La Vita al Fin del dì loda la Sera*", and "*Mal fà chi tanto così presto oblias*". The first would make a good epitaph. What story of faithlessness or betrayal may not be recorded by the second? . . .

ROME.

April 15th, 1923.

Prince and Princess Bülow invited me to-day to luncheon, but I preferred to pay them a little visit in the afternoon. They live in the Villa Malta, which they have appropriately renamed the Villa delle Rose. It is very large and sunny, with fine rooms somewhat marred by *nouveau-riche* decoration for which the previous owner—a Russian—is responsible. Presently, Prince Bülow came in and after a little while began to talk very freely, but he showed his usual tact by not alluding to German politics, nor to the troubled events in the Ruhr. After expressing the view that complete, integral Bolshevism would presently come to an end, he added: "*Mais il n'y a rien qui dure comme le provisoire.*" He was for many years Ambassador at St. Petersburg and described certain Government officials in Russia in terms that were far from complimentary. He said he had a real liking for the Emperor Nicholas, who had charming manners and was always animated by the best intentions, *mais comme tout homme faible il était un peu faux*. He said that it was the Empress who persuaded him to give De Witte his *congé*, and this for no better reason than because a caricature came into her hands showing the Emperor disguised as a marionette with De Witte pulling the strings. He said De Witte was very clever but incapable of acquiring even a superficial veneer of good manners or refinement. On the occasion of his dismissal he ignored Court etiquette, stormed and blustered and, in short, made an outrageous scene. The Emperor, looking down (as was apparently his invariable habit when he had anything disagreeable to say), explained very courteously that it was consideration for De Witte's health (De Witte being perfectly well) that made him desire that he should pass into retirement. At this De Witte protested and expostulated more than ever. The next day the Emperor sent him, through a Court official, a munificent gift of roubles. On receiving this De Witte was at once placated. In

fact, being unable to digest his delight alone, he raced round to the German Embassy and said to Prince Bülow, "Well, if the Emperor is not Solomon, at all events he is a very kind, good fellow."

Bülow said that, after long and wide experience, he was convinced that St. Petersburg and Moscow Society was the most agreeable in Europe. He particularly liked the evening after-dinner *salons*. "You could appear night after night for three months and then you could disappear for three months. It made no difference, no tiresome questions were ever asked, and a warm welcome greeted your return." Breaking into English for the first time he added: "But the Russians all hate fresh air and fresh water," and then relapsing into French, "*Et on ne pouvait jamais trop compter sur la propreté intime, même des femmes les plus élégantes*".

When I left, an immense sheaf of roses was waiting for me and Bülow, in an *ancien régime* way, gently insisted on drawing my arm through his and linked together we drifted down the long stairs to my car. I think that nineteenth-century courtesy rather becomes old people, though it would seem affectation in anyone belonging to this forthright generation, but in people no longer young rather elaborate manners seem to be a part of themselves and are as pleasing as the formality of an old garden.

None the less I do not altogether like Prince Bülow. Apart from his policy having been mildly but consistently anti-British, he gives me the impression of being only superficially "*bien élevé*"; beneath the surface one divines not strength only but a capacity for roughness and perhaps for dissimulation.

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CHAPTER X

1923

BERLIN

For some time past the value of the mark had been rapidly falling, and with the occupation of the Ruhr German finances were soon in a state of absolute chaos. By the autumn of 1923 the situation had become so serious that the Government declared themselves unable to hold out any longer, and passive resistance in the Ruhr was abandoned.

This surrender was to prove an important point in the history of post-war Germany, and it marked the beginning of her period of recovery. Her first task was obviously to stabilize the mark, and this she did quickly and effectively by the creation of the Rentenmark. Then in 1924 the Dawes Plan provided for a re-adjustment of the Reparations Settlement; and when this was followed by assistance from America in the shape of loans and commercial treaties, Germany was in a position to embark upon her task of reconstruction.

BERLIN.

October 17th, 1923.

After four months' absence I returned here, two days ago, to find the slump of the mark in full swing. In September the unavoidable renunciation of resistance in the Ruhr seemed to herald Stresemann's immediate fall, but for the moment he is maintaining himself in office. In some ways things are outwardly the same, and yet, fundamentally, everything has changed.

Motor-cars have disappeared and my winter bedroom on the Wilhelmstrasse that used to be insufferably noisy, is now quite silent and still. Some of the people who hurry along seem fairly prosperous, but the majority are poorly clad and look half-starved. Sometimes in the streets, but more frequently half hiding behind trees in the Tiergarten, one is up against the distressing spectacle of gentlefolk timidly stretching out their hands and asking for help, and what strikes me as quite new is the positive hatred with which workpeople glare enviously at anyone who is warmly dressed, and more especially at those who wear tidy boots or shoes. There are long queues in front of the food shops, and sporadic looting and riots that are promptly crushed by the "Green Police".

While all this sadness and misery are simmering, members of the *Corps Diplomatique* circle continue unostentatiously to try and

amuse themselves. The Dutch and Americans have had small dances but the normal routine consists of intimate little dinners followed by bridge. D'Abernon is pessimistic about the situation ; the exchange cascades down with ever increasing velocity, and over everything and everyone there hangs a dull fog of uncertainty and apprehension.

October 19th, 1923.

BERLIN.

To-day I went to the *Reichskanzlei* to pay my respects to Frau Stresemann. There were crowds of people hurrying in and out to see the Chancellor whose position is none too secure. Frau Stresemann is rather a pretty woman, small, slight, and *élégante* in figure. She and Frau Cuno, the late Chancellor's wife, though belonging to very different types and strata of society are, by a curious coincidence, two of the best looking women I have seen in Germany. Frau Excellenz Cuno is said to have had an American grandmother, while it is not forgotten in Berlin that Frau Stresemann is to some extent of Hebrew origin.

October 22nd, 1923.

BERLIN.

It becomes increasingly difficult to foresee what will happen during the next few weeks. Owing to the daily and hourly depreciation of the mark, the bakers hardly bake at all and there are frequent lootings of their shops by famished angry crowds. The butter and milk shops are also looted. The number of respectable people begging in the streets and in the Tiergarten increases, and Countess Moltke, the American wife of the Danish Minister, tells me that from the upper floor of their house, where the ex-proprietors still live (it having been found quite impossible to evict them when the Danish Government bought the house), the old serving woman last week disappeared. A few days later her body was fished up from the Spree. In her pocket was a small folded paper saying that she had not enough to eat and that for a long time her only happiness had been a weekly meeting with her sister. Neither she nor the sister could any longer afford the indispensable but rapidly rising tram fare. Life offered nothing but loneliness and starvation and she could endure it no longer. Nina Moltke, who is kindness itself, is much distressed at suicide having been committed for such reasons by someone who actually lived under her own roof. For months she has been sending to the family on the top floor copious contributions of food, as indeed she does to a number of other

old people and gentlefolk. She thinks the late owners must have passed on the food to their own relations and not allowed it to reach the servants. Nina is one of the people I like best in Berlin; she is kind, unaffected, and well supplied with that salt of life—a sense of humour. Count Moltke,¹ though rather lame, is extremely good-looking, has a cultivated mind, and is a very agreeable companion.

October 27th, 1923.

BERLIN.

The Chancellor and Frau Stresemann dined with us last night. He was just back from meeting Hugo Stinnes and other steel magnates on the edge of the occupied territory and the Ruhr. After dinner he confided to D'Abernon that the Government has decided to allow the Crown Prince to return from Holland and that he is to live in Silesia. We anticipate that Silesia will merely prove to be a roundabout stage on the road to Potsdam. Stresemann looked worried and depressed, very different from the pugnacious, "glad, confident morning" personality of a year ago. Goethe is almost an obsession with him and by way of light conversation, he embarked on an analysis not only of his character but of everything he ever wrote. As I have not read much of Goethe I finally succeeded in deflecting him on to Shakespeare and modern German authors. He detests Wedekind and considers his writings morbid, degenerate and devoid of "romantique". Shakespeare he adores and is ready to quote interminably. This he does fluently, alternating between English and a German translation. He recites with upturned eyes and at such moments, with his short neck, flat nose and wide mouth he looks not unlike an inspired bull-frog. But inspiration and understanding are there, and one is moved by his sincerity and unerring emphasis and interpretation.

I asked if Frau Stresemann shared his literary tastes, at which he rocked with laughter and said: "*Ach nein, mein Gott, Sie liebt das Leben!*" Which, to do her justice, is fairly obvious.

November 2nd, 1923.

BERLIN.

I was awakened this morning by a very small military band in undress uniform passing beneath the windows. This is the first time since we came in 1920 that any military music has been heard in Berlin.

¹ Subsequently Count Moltke became Minister for Foreign Affairs in Denmark.

November 4th, 1923.

BERLIN.

Prince and Princess Bülow dined with us last night. He eulogized Stresemann and enlarged on the difficulty of his task, and on the courage and ability with which he attacks it. He spoke also of the impending return of the Crown Prince whose character he defended, saying that his reputation for foolishness in general, and foolishness about women in particular, was much exaggerated; that his philanderings were never serious, and that he must have grown wiser and learnt a good deal during the long and solitary incarceration at Doorn. He thinks that the cramped loneliness of the life he has been compelled to lead there for five years was little less than barbarous and wellnigh unendurable for a man who, unlike the Kaiser, is still young.

Royal personages are a congenial topic with Prince Bülow. He spoke with great respect of Queen Victoria and had evidently been genuinely impressed when he accompanied the Kaiser to Windsor Castle and was privileged to see something of the Queen. He described a conversation which had amused him greatly. The Queen, during a dinner in St. George's Hall, and after a prolonged silence, beckoned across the table to the Kaiser and said, "I hope you liked the fish, William?" The Kaiser with *empressement*: "Oh, immensely, Grandmamma."—"I am very glad, lieber Wilhelm." Renewed silence. Such apparently was the level and limit of "table talk". But Bülow had been privileged to see Queen Victoria again in a long private interview and had been genuinely impressed by her character and wisdom. Speaking in French he said: "*Elle n'avait pas de l'esprit mais elle était ce que son petit fils¹ n'a jamais été, très équilibrée et très sage.*" He also described the Queen being carried in and out of St. George's Hall by the Indian attendants, on a gilt first Empire chair which he described as "*une espèce de trône*". The picturesqueness and the suggestion of oriental Empire and dominion had fired his imagination. Princess Bülow was (as always) voluble, forthcoming and stone deaf. Her neighbour at dinner, Count Bosdari (the Italian Ambassador), has a sonorous staccato delivery, and he alone managed occasionally to make her grasp some echo of what was being said. However, in spite of inhibitions, she is a fountain of amusing spontaneous remarks so that except for inconsequences (inseparable from a dialogue on one side only half apprehended), I get along far more easily

¹ The Emperor William.

and happily with her than with the Germans. *A propos* of the impending return of the Crown Prince, rather discreditable reports are in circulation about his brothers who are living in little villas in the not inappropriately named "Sans Souci" Park at Potsdam. One who is much in their company regards them as being without exception unbalanced and devoid of common sense. The same friendly gossip tells me that the late Empress, with whom circumstances brought him into contact, while a well meaning, exemplary wife and mother, was quite singularly dull and narrow-minded and bored the Emperor stiff. German royalties, possibly owing to the absence of Public School education and also to the scarcity of liberal minded tutors and governesses, have received a very one-sided education besides being too much inbred.

BERLIN.

November 6th, 1923.

Another wonderfully beautiful and golden autumn day. I rode in the Tiergarten with Count Ruggeri and found him, as always, well-informed, lively and pleasant. The price of a loaf has been arbitrarily fixed by the Government, but the shops will not sell at the Government price and there have been renewed riots and window smashings quite near the Embassy. Dr. Weissmann, Stadt Commissioner and Head of the Police, came to-day to luncheon. Either he really does anticipate improvement or else he thinks it politic to prophesy smooth things. Later the Austrian Minister came—he is on intimate terms with Stresemann, and was frankly pessimistic.

BERLIN.

November 7th, 1923.

Five hundred people were imprisoned yesterday for plundering. It began at mid-day and continued until it was stopped by the Reichswehr, who, it is whispered, fired on the people, but nothing of this is allowed to get into the Press. Barricades were erected across some of the principal streets and Marjorie Tyler (the daughter of our English house-steward), coming home from the office where she is employed as a typist, had to take a long roundabout way to get back to the Embassy. The opening incident occurred in a low quarter, but one that is only a few streets away, where several Jews were first stripped and then beaten to death. In complete ignorance of all this but at the very time these horrors were being enacted I was riding with

Mrs. Johnston (the wife of an American secretary) in the Tiergarten. Matilda Houghton, the American Ambassador's daughter, and Madame Cardenas were perhaps better informed or else they thought it prudent to stay inside the four walls of the Tattersall. (For some occult reason all Berlin riding schools—and they are many—are called "Tattersalls".) They feared stones might be thrown or something unpleasant would happen in the Tiergarten. I see no probability of this at present, and we were far from being the only people who rode outside. In the evening D'Abernon and I dined with the Brazilian Minister and pretty Madame Guerra-Duval¹ and played bridge. Three members of the French Embassy were our fellow-guests. They are uneasily self-conscious and not at all happy about the results of the Ruhr occupation and its repercussions all over Germany.

It is said that Stresemann cannot remain in power for many days; he has lost the support of the Socialists through his high-handed action towards the Communist Cabinet in Saxony, and the Right will not give him their support because they want to have a military dictator. In what manner a military dictator would be able to lower the price of *Lebensmittel* or make economic conditions easier one fails to see, but there is a slogan abroad amongst the Nationalists: "Better to die fighting than to die of starvation."

BERLIN.

November 10th, 1923.

The extent to which the Auswärtiges Amt turn to D'Abernon in all their difficulties was somewhat inconveniently emphasized last night, owing to Herr Excellenz Maltzan forcing an entrance at 2 a.m. He insisted on the night porter waking D'Abernon in order that his advice might be taken about an attempted revolution in Munich. D'Abernon tells me that disturbances there have been brewing up for some time. The chief agitator and organizer, a man of low origin, Adolf Hitler, appears to have gained the open support of General Ludendorff. As a consequence, here in Berlin, there has been to-day a non-stop demonstration of troops marching backwards and forwards and the President has given General von Seeckt increased powers over the Reichswehr. D'Abernon thinks the Putsch will collapse, and that it will have no repercussions here—indeed this evening he

¹ Mme. Guerra-Duval afterwards lost her life on the French Riviera in a motor accident.

told me that both Ludendorff and Hitler have been not only arrested but imprisoned and that the insurrection is at an end.

BERLIN.

November 11th, 1923 (*Armistice Day*).

This morning we went to a brief unpleasing Armistice Day service at the English church, conducted (owing to the illness of the Chaplain) by a German known to the British members of the congregation as "Oxo Liebig"—his real name being Levi. Later, five of us motored in two small cars to Potsdam and had luncheon at the Hôtel Einsiedler, afterwards strolling along the wide straight avenue that leads through the grounds of Sans Souci to Neues Palais. The sun shone and the fountains danced, and the Statues (not yet consigned for the winter to their wooden sentry boxes) stood white and gleaming against the trees. The woods, and especially the beech trees with their tenacious golden brown leaves, were never more lovely. On the road out by Spandau and Glinecke we met numbers of poor people, dragging go-carts filled with firewood from the Wald. The chauffeurs drove slowly and discreetly enough but were frequently abused and threatened. I had the Danish Minister, Count Moltke, in my little car and the Breens¹ and Colonel Stewart Roddie were in a larger car that preceded us, and it was they who came in for most of the clamorous vocal unpleasantness.

My English maid tells me this evening that the police shot at some *Schieber* and money-changers in the Tauzendstrasse while she was standing near. These men, although it is illegal to change money below the official rate, simply swarm in the streets. Anyone walking alone, who is not German, is followed and brushed up against, often right under the eyes of the Green Police, by men and even by women. They whisper, "*Wechseln, Wechseln*", and in many cases people are only too glad to follow the whisperer round the corner into a quiet cul-de-sac or yard and there get rid of some billions of worthless paper in exchange for a few dollars or indeed for any foreign *valuta*. But the transaction has its dangers for both parties. Sometimes the

¹ Major Breen was Press *attaché* at the British Embassy. Irish by birth he had been made a prisoner during the early months of the War and succeeded a record number of times in effecting escape from the various camps in which he was confined. On the last occasion he reached the Rhine before he was recaptured. D'Abernon considered him to be a man of rare ability. He found his insight into men and affairs in Germany prophetic and unerring.

exchanger is caught by the police, sometimes the other party to the transaction returns not only with empty pockets but relieved of boots, furs and overcoat.

BERLIN.

November 13th, 1923.

Yesterday D'Abernon sent a telegram to the Foreign Office saying that the female portion of the Consular and Embassy staffs (the typists and shorthand writers) ought to be sent home. The military missions and commercial sections have already sent back their women employées. D'Abernon anticipates that the fall in the value of the mark will again be precipitous and that then even the Government salaries will not be paid. People will have to live by barter or else by plundering on an even larger scale than is the vogue to-day. Should this happen, these English girls would be half-starved and the poverty stricken public might easily turn against them.

To-morrow at dawn I start on a four days' visit to the Lichnowsky's Schloss near Ratibor. I do not altogether like leaving Berlin just now when anything might happen, but D'Abernon cannot get away and I do no good by remaining. It will be a new experience to be a guest at a German shooting party, and after so many months in Berlin I long for change and for a breath of fresh country air.

The Crown Prince has arrived in Silesia, coming from Holland by motor-car. The "*mot d'ordre*" in Government and Society circles is to say that he is not at all a bad fellow, much maligned by the Kaiser's friends and greatly improved by five years of contemplative life on a Dutch island.

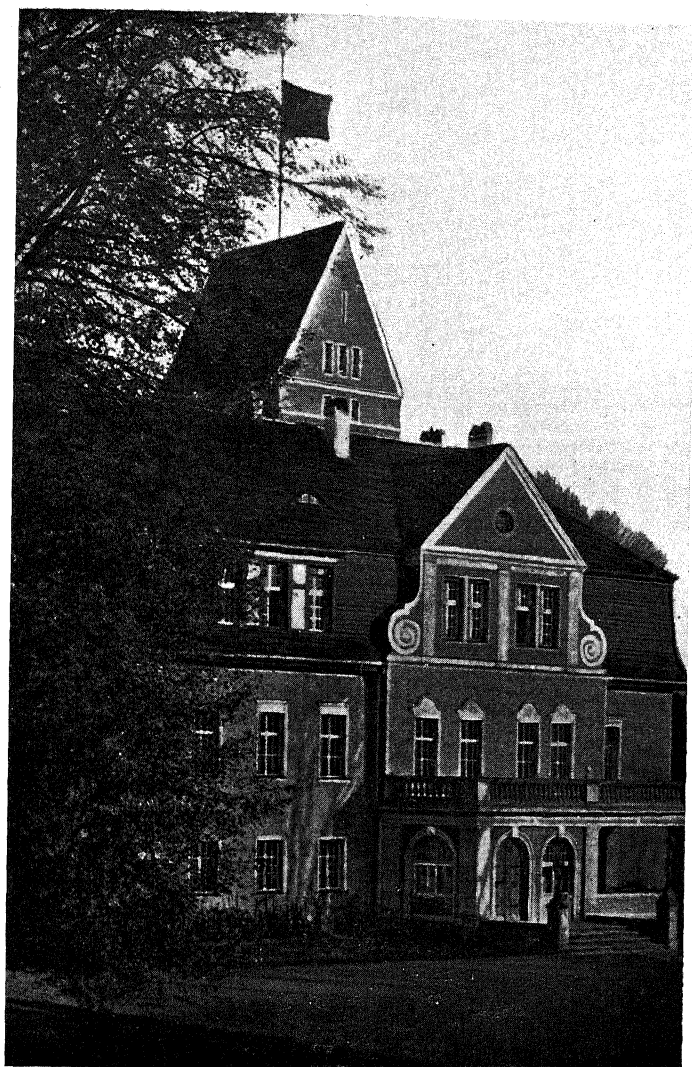
I spent this morning in the print-room of the Neues Museum where the Curator, Dr. Friedländer, showed me a fine collection of Albrecht Dürer drawings and engravings. They have marvellous freshness and variety. He also showed me a large collection of Rembrandt drawings and etchings, these last quite impressionist in their economy of detail. Most of these together, with the whole of the Botticelli Inferno designs, originally formed part of the Hamilton Palace collection. Dr. Friedländer has himself made a collection of Gainsborough drawings for the Museum during his frequent visits to England. Most of them he bought about 1910 or earlier for quite small sums, not more than £10 or £12 each. Some of them are charming and all are characteristic, especially in the drawing of the trees.

SCHLOSS KUCHELNA,
CZECHO-SLOVAKIA.*November 15th, 1923.*

I arrived at 6 p.m., motoring 20 kilometres from the station at Ratibor, where the Lichnowskys had sent a car to fetch me. On the way one crosses the German frontier into Czecho-Slovakia. With the largest half of his property and two *Schlösser* on the Czech side, the Fürst must have had some difficulty in keeping his German nationality. Possibly it is in order to preserve dual nationality that he is obliged to have a domicile in Berlin? This *Schloss* consists of two comfortable, but not conventional, modern houses that are built facing one another and divided by a courtyard.

The Lichnowskys and most of the servants are quartered in one house, while the guests and a few servants lodge in the other. This arrangement has drawbacks (as my one and only pair of silver shoes experienced last night when paddling across the yard in the rain), but it is a device by which both hosts and guests achieve complete independence and liberty. The "suite" allotted to me consists of a bedroom, maid's room, large sitting-room and bathroom. Bathrooms and their huge marble washstands (with singularly complicated nickel fittings) are far larger and more luxurious in Germany than in England. Space is sacrificed very liberally and the whole set-out is American, with elaborately fitted douches and labyrinthine tubes and taps. In Germany most houses are large and new, and imported marble abounds, whereas in England baths have had to be introduced *tant bien que mal* into old houses, and as far as possible with a minimum of expense. In places like Hatfield and Belvoir and Panshanger, etc., all the bathrooms are after-thoughts and only by sacrificing dressing-rooms and exercising ingenuity has it been possible to introduce them at all.

The party here consists of Leonora, the daughter of the house, who is said to be a mathematical prodigy. She is shadowed by a juvenile professor and chaperoned by Mechtilde's old governess. Then there are half a dozen guests; of these the most outstanding are Count and Countess Jean de Wilczek (she is a sister of the Austrian Count Kinsky), a Gräfin Königecke and her daughter, another Graf Wilczek, and an English-speaking sportsman called Miepieck. He plays bridge and fortunately urges fellow guests to do the same. It is all very like what country-house life was



Schloss Kuchalna
The Shooting Lodge of Fürst Lichnowski in Czecho-Slovakia

in England twenty years ago, especially as regards the shooting luncheons. After a beat, the hares and pheasants are laid out in tens (but there are not many pheasants owing to rearing and feeding difficulties and also to the practical impossibility of prosecuting poachers). We women stood for what seemed to be hours shivering in heavy wet boots, waiting and waiting for the hares, birds and rabbits to come.

The only unlooked for and quite un-English sight was that of three lovely little startled roe-deer. It is their close season, so no one fired at them as they passed swiftly and gracefully along the edge of a pinewood. Then there rang out a lusty bugle-call from a green-clothed *Jäger*, wearing a Tyrolese hat surmounted by an eagle's feather. The bugle call is repeated, on a different note, at the beginning and end of each drive. At luncheon Prince Lichnowsky explained this fanfare, saying that, although in abeyance until revived by the Kaiser, it is really a very ancient local custom. Anyway it needed no apology because it is both informing and picturesque. After luncheon, on the second day, rain poured down so, instead of paddling about after the guns, Mechtilde drove me over, in a closed Mercedes car, to see the old Lichnowsky *Schloss* at Graetz.

Graetz is a large mediaeval fortress beautifully situated on the summit of a wooded hill. On one side there is a sheer descent that falls into a lake at the foot of a steep cliff. It reminded me a little of lovely Airlie Castle only *Schloss* Lichnowsky is a great deal larger and the precipitous descent is also on a much bolder, vaster scale. The *Schloss* is now occupied by a Czech regiment; the officers are lodged in the visitors' rooms, the men in the stables, etc., and the bathrooms on the various floors are used as departmental kitchens. Everything is in a revolting state of dirt, disorder and dissolution. This, not unnaturally, has made the Lichnowskys sad and bitter. An old seneschal, their solitary retainer, produced the keys of the library and drawing-room; which are the only two rooms the Military have not appropriated. In these it was interesting to see a number of Beethoven mementoes; one was a contemporary portrait in which he looked quite young and rather good-looking. The *clavecin* he used is carefully preserved and also a large, late Louis XVI bureau—in style almost first Empire—at which, if tradition may be accepted, he spent most of the day and night composing symphonies. He seems to have passed long months at Graetz at the time when he dedicated sonatas to the (Polish) Fürstin

Lichnowsky, and to judge from a Vigée le Brun kind of portrait that hangs on one of the walls, she must have been a very lovely, disturbing *châtelaine*. We got back to Kuchelna in time for tea and the evening was again spent in mild conversation and milder bridge. Awaiting me was a telegram from D'Abernon saying that Berlin is quiet, also that the General Election in England is fixed for December 5th.

BERLIN.

November 18th, 1923.

I made a late return last night owing to bad rolling-stock and a resulting breakdown. It enabled me to observe how very different one sort of dead-flat country can be from another. In the Low Countries, one is always vaguely conscious of the nearness of water. It may be the sea, or at the least some dyke or ditch or lake. In central Europe a desolating sense presses down on one of illimitable uninhabited level plains, rolling away unendingly for hundreds and thousands of miles.

Perhaps it was owing to my late and weary return that I thought D'Abernon strained and tired. His work these days is incessant and not at all cheerful or rewarding. I think he is glad to have me back.

BERLIN.

November 26th, 1923.

Visits to-day from Princess Clary, Princess Löwenstein and Countess Henckel, the last of the trio was the only one a stranger to me. They are the three Austrian sisters of whom Princess Blücher wrote in *An English Wife in Berlin*, that throughout the bitter years of the war they alone remained consistently kind and considerate to her. I had not seen Princess Löwenstein (Osy Kinsky, she used to be called) since the days when—draped invariably in the same diaphanous white tulle—she floated round London ball-rooms, a lovely eighteen-year-old girl, a beautiful dancer and a favourite with everyone. To-day, clothed in untearable black repp, she is the mother of nine children and has become deeply and gloomily religious. Countess Henckel seemed much the liveliest of the three. There was a good deal of chatter about poor Daisy Pless and her affairs. She and Prince Pless were divorced a year ago and Daisy has not been dealt with as generously as was expected. On the other hand, they say that she is quite unfit to have control of money (or indeed of anything), only they think Pless should see that she has a

suitable salaried companion to manage her affairs. Instead, she is left alone in Berlin, in a kind of sanatorium, where I have been to see her, and from which I receive illegible, incoherent appeals asking for postage stamps or else for half a dozen marks to enable her to have her hair washed!

Presently Kühlmann came in. A talk with him is always stimulating because his mind has so many different facets. His great ambition has been for Germany to have a Central African Empire stretching from sea to sea. He would have preferred this form of Colonial Expansion to the acquisition of influence or territory in Morocco. I doubt whether there is substantial foundation for the opinion so widely held in England that in the years before 1914 he was a kind of Machiavelli deeply involved in bringing war about. It appears that he and his former chief, Lichnowsky, are no longer on speaking terms and this dates from 1917. Lichnowsky thinks that Kühlmann should have broken a lance in his defence at the time when his Memoirs were published (or pirated) abroad. It was after their publication that Lichnowsky was forbidden to wear his decorations and at the same time his name was erased from the Roll of the Herren Haus. Kühlmann, not unreasonably, believes that nothing he could have said or done would have made any difference and that there had been little in their relations to prompt so unusual and quixotic a course.

While staying at Kuchelna last week, Mechtilde told me that she had wanted Lichnowsky to resign the position of Ambassador in London after his return from Berlin in July 1914. She did not actually say that War had then been decided upon and that Lichnowsky knew it, but that was the inference her words conveyed, and *were meant to convey*. Both the Lichnowskys always have been and still remain completely friendly to England, and they look back upon the two years during which they occupied the Embassy in London as the happiest and most interesting time of their lives.

BERLIN.

November 27th, 1923.

Yesterday the Communists erected barricades all round the Lust-Garten and across the near-by streets so I did not go out. They are incensed by the new police order, issued by General von Seeckt, which forbids impartially all kinds of public meetings, whether composed of the extreme Left or the extreme

Right. About mid-day a cordon of Green Police closed the Wilhelmstrasse as a thoroughfare and at the same time some large *camions* of soldiers came our way, besides several small guns. Anxiety and apprehension pervaded Berlin during the remainder of the day, but here in the Embassy, we saw and heard nothing further.

This evening Maltzan,¹ the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, dined with us and sitting next to me related that yesterday about 13,000 Communists congregated in the Lust-Garten, that towards evening the Green Police on duty were threatened or attacked, and that they then forced the barricades, fired and dispersed the crowds, several score of whom were killed. A year ago, or even less, there would have been some indication of what had happened in the papers, but to-day the press is severely censored and absolutely nothing transpires. Even my other neighbour at dinner, Baron Gevers, who as Netherlands Minister has been longer in Berlin and is more intimate with the Government than other members of the *Corps Diplomatique*, knew nothing about the gunfire.

The Netherlands Legation is a very comfortable modern house in Rauchstrasse, about fifteen or twenty minutes from the Brandenburger Thor, but as far as feeling the pulse of the city goes, it might as well be at Potsdam. The British Embassy in Wilhelmstrasse is close to the Government offices and therefore much more in touch with passing events. It should never be moved or exchanged for a countrified suburban residence.

A few young people came in after dinner last night and there was some dancing. The "bright particular" stars were the nineteen-year-old White Russian bride of the Danish Counsellor, attired in a picturesque rose-coloured tulle dress, and Madame Halot, a Belgian who is also a recent bride. She was swathed in white satin which, as a Frenchman characteristically observed, was designed to reveal rather than to conceal *un charmant petit corps*. A few Germans came in and were merry and gay, amongst them the Maltzans, the two Gräfinnen Roedern, some of the Donnersmarcks and von Seidlitz.

BERLIN.

December 2nd, 1923.

This week has witnessed the fall, but also the reconstruction, of the Stresemann Cabinet. He himself is no longer Chancellor.

¹ Baron Maltzan became later Ambassador to Washington; subsequently he was killed in an aeroplane crash while on leave in Germany.

but he retains control of foreign policy and is already established at the Austwärtiges Amt. President Ebert is a devout Catholic, Stresemann, like most Germans, a free-thinker, therefore not a *persona grata* with the President, but he is the best speaker in the Reichstag and the Government cannot afford to lose him. None of the Ministers who came yesterday to my *jour* seemed elated by the changes, nor were they confident as to the probable duration and cohesion of the new Cabinet, but the *valuta* complications show a tendency to revert to what are called gold marks, and should this materialize it would do more than anything to consolidate and strengthen the Government. The various charitable organizations are running well, and there is far less begging in the streets than there was a month ago.

BERLIN.

December 9th, 1923.

A crowded "Benevolence Ball" took place last night at the Adlon Hotel; I suppose some 1,500 people assembled. It was carried out under the ægis of the American Embassy and organized by the Ambassador's pretty daughter, Matilda Houghton. Benevolence must have cleared well over fifteen hundred pounds, which, when added to the large sums already realized (mostly from abroad) will give prolonged assistance to the various "*Hungerhilfe*" soup kitchens, etc., that have been established in different parts of the city. We reserved a large table for supper, selecting the women guests to some extent for their good looks. Amongst them were Frau Stresemann herself, Gräfin Dolly Roedern, decidedly pretty with a short mop of dark hair, and the little soft, dormouse wife of the Brazilian Minister who is quite lovely in a Javanese kind of way. This ball really marks a new epoch and is a milestone on the road to reconciliation between Anglo-Americans and Germans, but unfortunately the French were not represented. The German ladies on the Committee said that, if the French took any part, the ball would be a fiasco because they themselves would resign and no Germans would come. However, as a matter of fact the dispute ended in an unobtrusive compromise and there were a few French people lurking in a quiet corner, but neither French nor Belgian names appeared on the List of Patrons, and as a result there has been in those quarters considerable resentment. The Americans first asked Countess Della Faille (the wife of the Belgian Minister) to be a patroness and then, after she had accepted, removed her

name from the prospectus circulated to advertise the Ball. To crown this lack of *doigté*, they then composed a letter saying that they were very sorry that she and the Belgian Minister would not be able to come to the Ball *because they had discovered that all the tickets had been already sold!* However, in the end they *did* come and sat at the American Ambassador's table. The truth is that both French and Belgians are unwilling or unable to recognize that they cannot have it both ways, and that it is quite inconceivable that they should be welcome at any assembly of Germans when all the unemployment and misery in Berlin is rightly or wrongly attributed to their occupation of the Ruhr. As a distinguished neutral, who must be nameless, remarked: "*C'est curieux, mais ils ne paraissent pas comprendre qu'on ne peut pas occuper la Ruhr et en même temps assister à une fête de bienfaisance*".

BERLIN.

December 10th, 1923.

General von Kluck, of Marne celebrity, came to-day to luncheon with his daughter. We have known him now for some time, and the more I see of him the more I recognize that in everyday life he is a singularly good-natured, harmless old gentleman. To-day, seeing his soft black hat and unwieldy Gamp umbrella lying in the hall, the clerical, not to say the midwifely, appearance of these properties struck me as being so inconsistent with his name and military achievements that I could hardly keep from laughing as I hastened forward to greet him.

BERLIN.

December 11th, 1923.

Last night we had an enormous French and Entente dinner which entailed excluding all but official Germans. The only non-officials invited were Albert Goldschmidt Rothschild and his young and pretty wife. At dinner I had an interesting retrospective talk with the Italian Ambassador, Bosdari. He has twice been posted in London, making in all a total of five years' residence. A slight shade of resentment resulting from the reserved attitude of most of the people he knew, seems to linger in his mind, coupled with some misgivings as to the liveliness of their intelligence and the extent of their culture, but this is compensated by a deep and genuine admiration for the national character. Sir Edward Grey he liked immensely, appreciating his freedom from pose and recognizing his intrinsic goodness.

But he could not resist adding : “ *Mais son ignorance était encyclopédique. Figurez-vous qu’il croyait qu’une ville d’Albanie dont je lui parlais était située sur la mer Euxine, et toute sa géographie était semblable, mais je l’aimais, il avait une droiture et un charme personnel difficile à analyser mais tout a fait irrésistible.*” His considered opinion is that the late Lord Salisbury was by far the best informed and the most able Foreign Minister that England has had during the last fifty years.

CHAPTER XI

1924-6

BERLIN

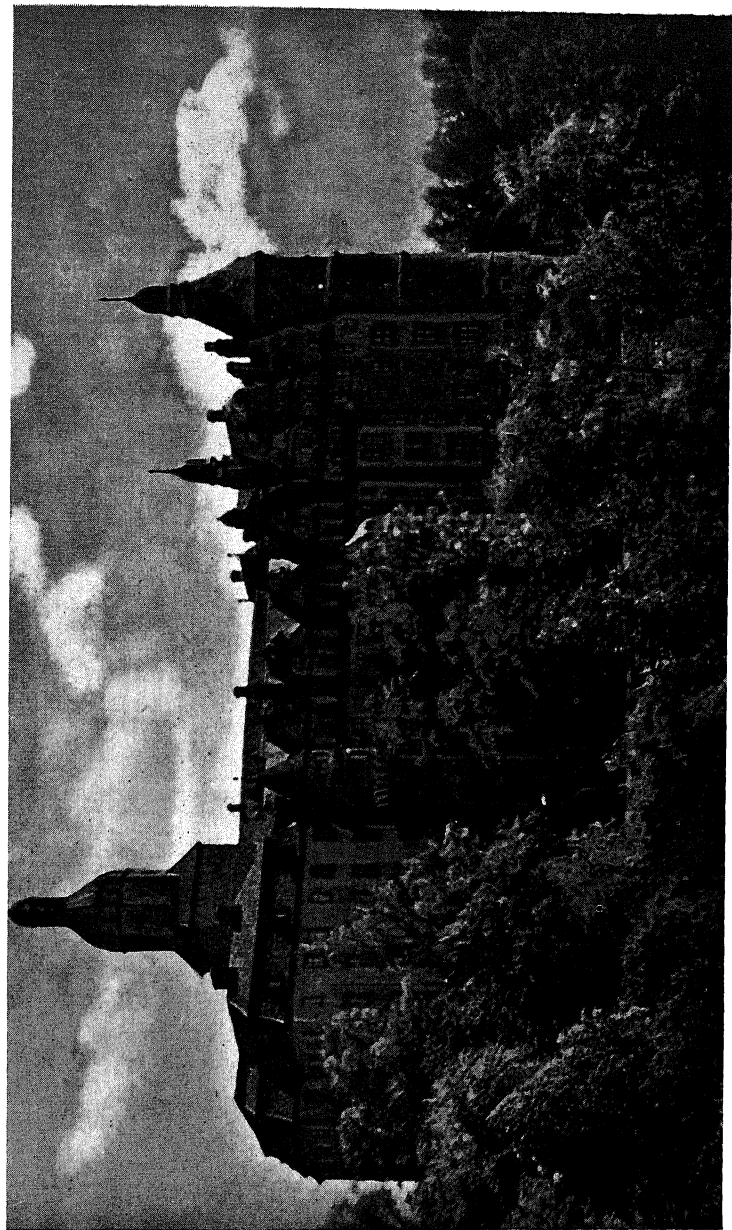
FÜRSTENSTEIN,
UPPER SILESIA.

January 1st, 1924.

Some time since Prince Pless invited us to spend the New Year at Fürstenstein. We accepted and were glad to have this excuse for avoiding *Jour de l'an* formalities in Berlin.

Short of Welbeck as it was in the old Edwardian days, I have seen little that at all compares with Fürstenstein and its immense and prodigal luxury. Nothing is lacking that wealth and a highly developed sense of comfort can provide. We are lodged in one of five gorgeous "suites" that were originally arranged, it is believed, in the hope that they might shelter simultaneously the Emperors of Germany, Austria and Russia together with such minor potentates as the Kings of Saxony and Roumania. Other apartments are complete with almost equally gorgeous sitting-rooms and bathrooms. The rooms allotted to me are full of orchids, hot air, musical clocks and electric vibrators. Nothing superfluous has been omitted, not even caviare and chocolate in addition to three different mineral waters at the side of the bed. The inhabitants of the neighbouring villages prostrate themselves in the snow on the approach of the *Fürstliche Familien* and the open sledges that brought us from the station scattered pedestrians into the ditch as their silver bells proclaimed with lively carillons the approach of the Prince's honourable guests. It seemed a reincarnation of the eighteenth century.

Daisy Pless was divorced eighteen months ago and is, therefore, no longer here, but her three tall sons are very much to the fore, as is also Count Constantine Deym. I remember him in years long past as one of my partners at balls in the London season at the time when his father was Austrian Ambassador, the Embassy being the house next door to that of my father in Belgrave Square. He is now very much married to a pretty half-Spanish little wife who only consents to set sail from the port of their Bohemian retreat if escorted by a phenomenally



Schloss Fürstenstein Silesia, the seat of H. H. Fürst Heinrich of Pless

dull Cuban mother and three Los Meninas¹ sisters. Other guests include various ex-Chamberlains and *Hoffmarschalls* of the late Kaiser. One of whom talks of having been with him during the summer cruise in July 1914. Amongst the younger people is Graf Scherr-Thoss, a rubicund, cardboard specimen of the Corps de Garde Prussian officer; his elder brother is married to Muriel White, daughter of Mr. Harry White, for many years Counsellor of the United States Embassy in London. To-morrow Prince and Princess Blücher are expected for the day from Kreblowitz and are bringing with them a mixed cosmopolitan party.

Fürstenstein is certainly unique. It reveals an aspect of German life that I had not seen or even suspected. Amongst other reflections, it suggests that these great landowners of Central Europe in losing their nationality have unavoidably lost all sense of patriotism. Born Austrian or German, they find themselves, regardless of all theories of self-determination, violently torn from Germany or Austria and transferred to Poland or Czecho-Slovakia as the case may be. Prince Pless by special privilege appears to have acquired, for the moment, some kind of dual nationality. Since the League of Nations' decision about Upper Silesia, his coal mines and the place from which he takes his name have been incorporated into Poland, yet so far he does not seem to have entirely sacrificed German nationality or German sympathies. It is not difficult to imagine that a welter of complications and antipathies must supervene when a complete *volteface* of political loyalty is forced upon these large landed proprietors and their dependants by a change of nationality in which they have had no choice.

To-day Poland and Czecho-Slovakia are not merely the allies but the pensioners of France. This post-war world is like Alice Through the Looking-Glass, "you must run hard to keep in the same place" and perhaps harder still to feel at home in another.

January 2nd, 1924.

To-day we were taken over the stables, the gardens and the stud farm. This last boasts four or five stallions and more than a hundred colts and fillies. The horses look out of condition. During the winter season, which lasts normally for three or four months, they are kept in loose boxes (except for an occasional run in a large tan-yard).

¹ The dwarfs in Velazquez' famous picture.

The hot-houses were built by a Breslau firm and are the best I have ever seen. Outside the thermometer may, and does, register many degrees of frost, but within thickets of tropical plants continue to be nourished by steaming waterfalls and ponds of warm water, and the winter gardens that form an annexe to the houses are laid out something like a Chicago Zoo or a Hollywood film. To-night there is to be a performance in the private theatre.

I had a long talk with Hansel, the eldest son, this evening. He is twenty-three, serious-minded and well-intentioned, has succeeded in passing examinations and on his own account has done a lot of miscellaneous reading ; all this on personal initiative, for nothing could be less thought out or more happy-go-lucky and undisciplined than the upbringing of the three sons has been. Hansel is quite unlike Lexel, the second son who, with good looks and inordinate length of limb, appears to be a pleasure-loving light-weight. I suggested to Hansel that perhaps a suitable companion might be found to look after his mother and her money affairs ; but it is not easy for a young fellow to take on the job of finding the right sort of lady-companion for an irresponsible parent, and Daisy is so erratic and quick-tempered that the lady-help might not be accepted after all. As for the old Fürst he is not ill-natured nor intentionally unkind, but he is indolent, a confirmed egoist and a colossal snob. He and his sons repeat in a chorus like cuckoo clocks—"Daisy is crazy", which I do not question, and they think this closes the subject and relieves them of all responsibility.

BERLIN.

Saturday, January 12th, 1924.

To-night the President and Frau Ebert came to dinner. Berlin regards this as a great event because it is the first time they have dined in an alien Embassy or, indeed, in any Embassy at all. Neither he nor she speaks anything but German, so the evening was somewhat handicapped, but all things considered it went off well. After dinner we had some good music—interrupted at intervals by the circulation of large tumblers of Lager beer. The President, like most Germans, enjoys classical music and the concert relieved me from the prolonged strain of talking German. They stayed late. He has the reputation of being wise in Council and of sound judgement. She is natural and unpretentious. Altogether they appear to be two estimable

people thrust, by a caprice of Providence, into a position for which they are singularly unsuited.

August 4th, 1924.

To-day is the tenth anniversary of England's declaration of War. Ten years ago I little thought I should spend it in Berlin in company with the American State Secretary, Mr. Hughes and his wife, having tea in a pavilion that stands in the garden of the Berlin Foreign Office. The Hughes are here on a short call, having already visited both London and Paris. In Paris Mr. Hughes had an interview with President Poincaré which, it appears, led to some very plain speaking on either side. Hughes, so the American Ambassador tells me, is hopeful about the results that may possibly follow.

Frau Stresemann was receiving the Hughes by herself because Stresemann left this morning, with the German delegation, to take part in a fresh Conference in London, and D'Abernon and I were the only guests besides the American party. Mrs. Hughes seemed rather reserved, an epitome of what one conceives—probably erroneously—to be the "Mayflower" type—and no doubt a sterling woman. Hughes has a well-shaped head and looks as though he may have a strong character. I found him pleasant enough, but by no means cordial.

On August 2nd, two days ago, there was a war anniversary ceremony in front of the Reichstag. There were dense masses of people, brass bands, theatrical decorations and an oration from the President. To-day the decorations remain and there are numbers of people sitting and standing about. Dusty, lusty young men ride up on bicycles, some evidently from a considerable distance. They dismount and gaze upwards at the words that have been placed above the Reichstag: "*Dem Lebenden Geiste unserer Toten.*" To the youth of this country, war remains less of a scourge than a religion.

In staging anything that is a pageant or a set scene the Germans show surprising imagination and invention, possibly this has been accentuated and guided by Reinhardt's influence. After Rathenau's murder, the scene in the Reichstag was fine and impressive. High above the assembled people an immense draped hearse was raised on a stage at one end of the chamber, surrounded with fir tree branches as large as trees. To-day the whole vast pediment of the Reichstag, and the entire space behind the columns supporting it, are packed with a solid green

tapestry composed of little leaves of *Tannenbaum*; ¹ the emblem of fidelity, so dear and familiar to all classes of the people: "O *Tannenbaum*, O *Tannenbaum*, *Wie Treu sind Deine Blätter*. . . ." In front of this was placed a great, richly draped monumental *catafalque* and around it were fires burning on six different altars. On each of the two central altars was hung a single immense wreath of laurel. There were no little untidy oddments of fading flowers and garlands such as rather degrade and disfigure War Memorials in London and indeed War memorials all over the British Isles.

August 6th, 1924.

To-day there came to luncheon one of Berlin's most distinguished surgeons. He is conspicuously scientific and up-to-date without any inhibitions due to tiresome and unnecessary reserve. Indeed he exhibited a brutal frankness that held one's attention rather unpleasantly. He told us that during the War he was close up to the Front, at times operating both by day and by night, with the Crown Prince's army. He seemed to be well informed about the habits and peculiarities of the Kaiser's court, and repeated what one hears from many sources, that the Empress was a bigoted, prejudiced, half-educated woman. She bored the Kaiser, but none the less she had great influence with him and she used this influence to block any echo of outside information or advanced opinion that might otherwise have reached him. The Professor told an amusing story of the childish pleasure the Kaiser took in continually trying new effects with the electric lighting of the *Weisser Saal* in the Berlin *Schloss*. The alterations were frequent and expensive and ended by causing the Treasurer some anxiety. One day, when the Kaiser was expatiating to a visitor on the latest system introduced, the visitor enquired whether these changes did not entail very large expenses. The General-Adjutant, glancing nervously at the Kaiser, admitted that they did. This greatly irritated His Imperial Majesty but with apparent good humour he answered jocosely: "Very well, you think me extravagant, I will economize. I might have one General-Adjutant the less." And he kept his word. The Professor spoke of the Crown Prince with little liking and some contempt. He described two characteristic incidents, saying they would seem to us incredible,

¹ Fir Tree.

and that he himself would not have believed them possible had he not been an eye-witness. He said that at the time of the attacks upon Verdun, when Storm troops were being sacrificed in thousands, the Crown Prince went to meet some regiment that was passing up towards the furnace, and he went *dressed in white flannel with a tennis racket in his hand*. Earlier in the War, at the time when there was very severe fighting in the Argonne and when every available ambulance was needed for bringing in the wounded, the Crown Prince, whose H.Q.s were in the rear, sent up an urgent request for a motor ambulance to be sent down, adding that he was organizing cavalry races, and could not allow the officers taking part in them to risk accidents without there being an ambulance on the spot.

A somewhat different subject, upon which Professor X appeared to hold strong and possibly extreme opinions, is that of abortions. He said that of the total number that occur yearly in Berlin (and he thought the percentage was almost as high in other large cities) 90 per cent. were induced. Of the 10 per cent. remaining nearly all were due to syphilis, that ghastly avoidable disease which is the scourge of civilization.

At his invitation I have consented to go with him to see Professor Virchow's vast municipal hospital in a suburb of Berlin, early next week.

August 12th, 1924.

To-day we went to see the Virchow Hospital. It has two thousand five hundred beds and is spread out through a number of low detached buildings in a kind of park. A long wide avenue of trees runs down the centre, with flowers and green hedges on either side. This differentiates it from any hospital in England. There is a vast central kitchen, with an army of cooks and a well organized system of motor distribution for the patients' food. Everything is done on a colossal scale and is very up-to-date. The operating rooms are heated by electric steam and in them water can be made to boil in a few seconds. Not only the operating theatres, but all the passages and rooms have glazed white tiles. These are contrived without any ledges or angles, so that dust and dirt cannot collect. A feature of which the Governor appeared to be at once inordinately proud and completely sceptical is an immense heliotherapy room. It is shaped like the interior of a colossal pumpkin and has no angles. The patient sits or stands in the centre of the chamber

and is assailed by rays of light from all sides, including the semi-circular floor and ceiling.

There are large halls for gymnastics and massage. These were stuffy and ill-ventilated, the windows being all tightly closed. Nor are the wards kept fresh and airy as in England. They are extremely plain and bare, beds and bed-stands are of unpainted iron. The linen is coarse and the blankets are dark military blankets.

Nurses, although this August weather is unusually sultry, were wearing thick winter boots. On their heads, no veil or cap, and on their backs no uniformity of costume. They appear to be only half-trained and to come from a rough, inferior class. I infer that the dressings of the inmates' wounds must be done by the doctors or the students.

One advantage resulting from the unlimited acreage available is that the buildings are none of them high, so that lifts and long stairs are not required and convalescent patients pass easily from the wards into the really delightful gardens. I am told that the hospital is always full. There are no courses for medical students; these take place in town in the *kliniks* connected with the University. The doctors and surgeons employed have large salaries and theoretically they are compelled to live in the hospital in order that they may devote themselves exclusively to its inmates, but I gather that there is some elasticity about this regulation and that several doctors have rooms in Berlin for private consultations and practice. My net impression is that, in spite of ultra-modern appliances and equipment, the hospital does not, for hygiene and personnel, compare favourably with the great London hospitals.

September 28th, 1924.

We dined last night at the Italian Embassy. Count Bosdari has lately returned from the annual gathering of the "School of Wisdom" at Darmstadt. It is held under the ægis of the fashionable philosopher Count Keyserling who married a granddaughter of the first Prince Bismarck. Keyserling was my neighbour at dinner and is, it appears, half a Balt or perhaps in part a Russian. He talks in fluent but occasionally unintelligible English, the tempo being equal to that of an express train. He made several surprising assertions, such as this—that Italy is to-day the standard-bearer in the van of civilization and twenty years in advance of all other nations. Much that he says it is

impossible to accept but occasionally there comes a sudden flash illuminating dark places in the wilderness of speculation—some suggestion or idea that is completely original and stimulating. Socialism is, in his opinion, already played out. Bolshevism will conquer in the East but will gain no foothold in the West. Russia since 1917 has merely discarded the trappings of Western civilization (which were always superficial) and has reverted to the indigenous Tartar characteristics of cruelty, corruption and oppression. He thinks that the ultimate results of Bolshevism and the socialistic tendencies of to-day will in no country become settled and stable until three generations have passed, i.e. not before 60 or 80 years' time. He anticipates that by then an entirely new and different civilization will have been evolved, and that from this new civilization a far less material system of life will emerge. He thinks that the materialism, the lack of any sense of spiritual values, so conspicuous to-day in all countries and amongst all classes, will go on spreading further and deeper and by so doing will presently exhaust itself and bring about a reaction owing to its devastating aridity and barrenness. Already to-day he sees that the desire for a higher life and a higher plane of thought is urgently felt by the best minds, and this conviction will, as always, gradually spread lower and wider and will eventually leaven the materialism that is so degrading a feature of modern civilization. He believes that the Far East and its hoards of barbarians will certainly overrun and annihilate Western civilization unless the League of Nations succeeds in uniting Europe and in so doing recovers for Europe her fast fading prestige. He maintains that Western prestige has gone under—perhaps for ever—in India, in China and in Japan. His ideas are not free from inconsistencies, and he seemed extremely sceptical about the future of the League of Nations. He spoke disparagingly of Lord Balfour's works on philosophy, but with some respect of Bergson, commending him not only as a thinker but as a stylist. Of his own latest book, now being translated into English, he talked with undisguised enthusiasm. Indeed in connection with himself he exhibits neither reticence, modesty nor humour. The new work is, apparently, a "poem", a thing of "infinite beauty". The translation of it is, he says, wonderful—but not "blatantly literal".—"The translator is competent enough to assimilate and to interpret the rhythmic waves of my tidal thoughts." Such were his words and such was his phrasing.

He said, with apparent sincerity, that he *enjoys* pain and insomnia because both are powerful stimulants to thought. Happiness, in the ordinary sense, he derides, but confessed that he derives immense satisfaction from projecting his ideas and from unsealing the eyes of those whom he addresses in his Lectures. (He evidently felt confident that he was unsealing mine.)

The English are, he maintains, the most sub-conscious people in creation. They act uprightly without any process of conscious reasoning, without any clearly formulated or expressed idea. Simply, it would seem through instinct or atavism, the result of an ancient, slow, persistent civilization, reacting upon what he plainly considers to be clay of a somewhat dense unmalleable type. At the close of this long monologue the net impression that remained with me was that of a man endowed with a mind of unlimited range and resource, lightning-quick in penetration, in observation, in verbal retort, but ill-balanced, super-idealistic, a mind that soars into the empyrean and loses all hold on reality, and equally with science and with common sense. (Count Bosdari writes to me this morning that after we left last night Keyserling remarked that he had found me "rather interesting, but far too logical, like all the English".)

NOTE

Although no entries were made in this Diary for sixteen months between September 28th 1924 and January 27th 1926, the interest subsequently aroused by the Treaty of Locarno induces me to insert here a few notes extracted verbatim from a 1925 Engagement Book. They are as follows :

1925.

January 14th. E. excited about a talk with State Secretary von Schubert. Some plan, to be called "Das Kind", for securing mutual security to France and Germany.

January 20th. E. has sent "Das Kind" to the F.O.¹

January 30th. E. worried. No reply from A.C.² "Das Kind" appears to be still-born.

February 5th. A.C. replies: "Proposal inopportune."

February 19th. E. rather happier about "Das Kind".

¹ Foreign Office.

² Sir Austen Chamberlain.

January 27th, 1926.

We dined last night with President Hindenburg. Were it not for Monsignor Pacelli,¹ the gifted, picturesque and singularly sympathetic Roman-born Nuncio, D'Abernon would be *doyen* so that it fell to my lot as *doyenne* to be taken in to dinner by the President. There were about 80 people, all of whom were either diplomatic or official, with the exception of his aide-de-camp son, and one or two others in undress uniform. He himself wore ordinary evening clothes without decorations and conversed all the evening in French. He speaks slowly and with some hesitation, but hesitation is coupled with an unwavering determination to go through with it and he does not like to be assisted by the suggestion of the word for which he is laboriously seeking. At first our conversation was conventional and tentative. I congratulated him on his wonderful eyesight and on his having read his speech, without spectacles, in the dim light of the Reichstag a year ago. This was the occasion when, much against the grain, he took the oath of allegiance to the Constitution. At this he appeared to be rather pleased, and then confided that he had *never* consulted a dentist! Later, we got on to the subject of the War. War was the only topic he warmed to, and, when I told him that I was with a French *Ambulance* at Vic-sur-Aisne and Soissons in 1918, his manner and expression completely changed, and he began to speak quite frankly and easily about everything. He said he did not give up all hope of winning the War until August 1918. He would not allow that the Kiel mutiny was spontaneous. He thought it was entirely the result of communist propaganda. He is strong on the inevitableness of wars, even under increasingly intense and destructive conditions.

He related that one day in the summer of 1918, almost the last occasion on which the Emperor came to Headquarters from Spa, and while they were motoring along at a good pace, they ran rather suddenly into a long column of English prisoners. The officers leading the column looked grave and dejected. The Emperor, in spite of Hindenburg's military protest, insisted on stopping the car in order to speak to them. He spoke very kindly, and said they were the victims of their own wonderful courage and were prisoners only because they had stood their

¹ The Nuncio, Monsignor Pacelli, became later a Cardinal and Secretary of State to Pope Pius X and, after eleven years, he himself was elected Pope on the death of Pius X in the spring of 1939.

ground too long. Hindenburg said that the eyes of the leading officer filled with tears. I thought it was loyal of Hindenburg to relate a little incident favourable to the Emperor in these days when no one has a good word for him, and courteous of him to find this way of praising indirectly the courage of British officers to me. He added that the British troops had stood and fought magnificently in the spring and summer of 1918. He deplored trench warfare, saying it was unlike anything he had ever imagined possible. In 1914 the War should have been over in a few months as it was in 1870.

My impression was that of a very dour but very sterling old man, not enjoying his present position yet determined to fulfil his duty to the Fatherland and convinced that it is the best thing for Germany that he should be at the head of the State at the present time.

As compared with President Ebert's dinners, this banquet was remarkably well done. There were three long tables round three sides of a very large room, and twenty or thirty liveried servants, headed by a kind of *Hofmarschall* of gold-laced butlers. This majestic individual wielded a heavy gilt staff with which at the end of dinner, and taking up a position exactly opposite the President, he indicated by three drum-taps on the floor that the feast was now concluded, and that the guests might disperse into the surrounding rooms. When we all got up we found that this deploying movement was being directed by other gold-laced butlers, with other gilded staves, and we were conducted out by five different doors, like the columns of retreating armies. The result was surprisingly good because in spite of numbers there was no tiresome waiting or congestion in any single doorway. The President's daughter-in-law did the honours quietly but well and without fuss or self-consciousness. After we had had coffee, an aide-de-camp drew D'Abernon and me apart, into a small private room, when one of the officials handed President Hindenburg two Grand Cordons of the German Red Cross, which is the only Order that the Socialist régime has not abolished. One of these, with a nice little speech, he presented to D'Abernon and afterwards the other one with a few words to me. We accepted them, I hope graciously, if not without remembering the demeanour of the German Red Cross women towards British prisoners at railway stations during the War, and consequently with a whimsical feeling of the extraordinary inappropriateness of the presentation.

A few months later, when it became known that we were leaving Berlin, the President presented D'Abernon, on behalf of the German Government, with a very beautiful large silver *épergne* and four silver candlesticks. The *épergne* is decorated with the arms of the King of Saxony and is dated 1750, and all five pieces were taken, I am told, from the State Museum at Dresden. After receiving, via the Foreign Office, a consenting and approving telegram from the King, D'Abernon accepted the gift, and is much gratified to have in his possession so beautiful a *ricordo* of the six and a half momentous years we have passed in Germany.

The following is a letter from Geneva shortly before D'Abernon's departure from Berlin, written by State Secretary Karl von Schubert on the entrance of Germany into the League of Nations.

*Der Staatssekretär
Des Auswärtigen Amts.*

*Genf,
September 27, 1926.*

DEAR LADY D'ABERNON,

Let me first of all give you my sincerest thanks for your very kind letter. I was deeply touched by your kind congratulations to our entry into the League of Nations. I too consider this event as a further step on the way of successful purification of this continent which necessitates a healing of its wounds and a recovery much more urgently than most people know. I hope with all my heart that all European countries will continue on that road. . . .

You mentioned my co-operation during the last ten months. That is extremely kind of you. But you know as well as I do that my modest work would not have been possible if I had not been fortunate in co-operating with one of the wisest and at the same time most generous men amongst our contemporaries in Europe—Lord D'Abernon. I cannot enough repeat how I appreciated his clear vision of the most intricate political situations and how I particularly admired his strong optimism which he never lost, not even under the most difficult circumstances. I do not exaggerate by saying that he was one of the most important and decisive factors in the political play during the last two years, and that, if better prospects for the future should now be opened, this is greatly due to him.

Under these circumstances you will understand that I am

extremely sorry that he leaves us now. But we are certainly not less sorry that you too will leave us, dear Lady D'Abernon. I know very well that you have always followed our common work with great and sympathetic understanding, and during those years of distress when the outlook for Germany was so depressingly gloomy I always felt your sympathy for our people. We all, who had the pleasure of knowing you in Berlin, shall never forget it, of that I can assure you.

I may say that also for my wife who wrote me the other day again how sorry she was that you have to leave.

I shall return to Berlin to-day together with my delegation. I look very much forward to seeing you again. My wife who is in the country will come to Berlin for a few days for that purpose.

Believe me, dear Lady D'Abernon,

Yours very sincerely,

K. V. SCHUBERT.

On a grey morning of the very last days of September D'Abernon presented to President Hindenburg his letters of recall. It may some day be of interest if the following extract from the Speech made by the President on this occasion is preserved. Hindenburg had always maintained towards the League of Nations an attitude so reserved as to appear almost unfriendly. Consequently the passage alluding to the League and to Locarno has excited considerable interest and comment.

"When you presented your credentials to my predecessor in office six years ago, the world was still under the direct influence of the war which had just come to an end. Passion and personal feelings governed European politics. In the speech which you delivered at the time, you laid stress on the fact that the world crisis could only be overcome by universal co-operation and by courageous recognition of the truth that the weal of the individual is the weal of the community, that economic reconstruction was the urgent need of the world and could only be attained in an atmosphere of confidence. During the years of your sojourn here, you have remained faithful to that programme. But you were not merely content to restore official relations between your Government and that of the Reich to a position of reciprocal confidence, you endeavoured to grasp the inward mentality of the German people, to understand the conditions of unprecedented difficulty existing in Germany and



1926

Viscount D'Abaddon leaving the Reichskanzlei after presenting his letters of recall to President Hindenburg

to place your wide knowledge and rich experience, above all in economic questions, at their disposal.

"The close of your mission coincides with that of an important epoch in post-war European history. With the coming into force of the Locarno Treaties and with Germany's entry into the League of Nations, the policy of permanent European peace has made an important step forward. In this evolution, you have taken a paramount share which will not be forgotten."

October 8th, 1926. London.

We left Berlin on October 6th, receiving in the streets and at the railway station a wonderful ovation both from unknown people and from hundreds of acquaintances and friends. During the last weeks of our embassy we were surprised and touched by many and various manifestations of esteem and goodwill for which previous contacts had not altogether prepared us. These were not confined to the circle of Official and society people but came from all sorts and conditions of men—indeed many came from complete strangers.

If the pages of my diary have sometimes betrayed ungenerous feelings towards the Germans, the warmth and genuineness of their Farewell went far to soften and correct an attitude of mind generated by harsh and difficult circumstances (the inevitable aftermath of a great War), rather than by inability to recognize the many strong and sterling qualities peculiar to this great people.

NOTE. *June, 1945*

Impressions regarding Germany and Germans, formed in the years following the Great War 1914-18, will to-day appear somewhat short-sighted and by retouching the Berlin Diary its implications might have been brought more into focus with much that the World War has revealed. None the less, recalling Francis Bacon's dictum, that "all books are but the language of their time", I think it best to leave these diaries precisely as they were written.

H. D'A.

APPENDIX I

Walter Rathenau was assassinated in a peculiarly horrible and cowardly manner (see p. 61 Vol. II of D'Abernon's *Ambassador of Peace*) on June 28th, 1922. He was 54 years of age, in the plenitude of his powers, and had probably attained the height of his ambition. He was a Jew, a very big man, good looking, not dark and not conspicuously Jewish in type.

There can be no doubt that the anti-Jewish feeling, always latent in Berlin, was more than unfriendly towards him, not only on account of his race but also because of his Marxist writings on Social Evolution and because of his having been given the post of State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Wirth's short-lived Government, which advocated for Germany the policy of fulfilment. He was a practical Economist, having successfully controlled the distribution of new materials during the war of 1914-18. In addition he was an original thinker and in *Zur Kritik der Zeit* and other writings ideas are adumbrated which now, twenty-five years later, are openly advocated by many people in Great Britain. In it he recommended a re-organization of Industry and a new Social Order which should recognize and establish the freedom, but also the responsibility, of all. In the most important of his Utopian works, *Von Kommenden Dingen*, he wrote as a Transcendentalist and pleaded for the freeing of the soul by a revaluation of moral worth. (Influence of Nietzsche.) Other subjects on which he wrote were the Jewish Question and the German Revolution of 1918.

Walter Rathenau and Professor Keyserling were perhaps the two most remarkable men I knew during a period of over six years that we passed in Berlin. Stresemann was, of course, more conspicuous and notable owing to his predominance in the Reichstag, his courage and resource, his political sagacity and his achievement in bringing Germany into the League of Nations, but it may be doubted whether, as an original thinker, he was the equal of Rathenau or of Keyserling.

H. D'A.

January 1943.

APPENDIX II [ANÆSTHETICS]

I had observed during the months passed in French hospitals in or near Dieppe in 1915 that there was in France no superfluity of chloroform or ether, and that for minor operations an anæsthetic was not infrequently omitted. It was no less evident that skilled anæsthetists were entirely absent. I think that only persons who have assisted at operations can form any idea of the intense anxiety and distress to which a patient is subjected when a general anæsthetic is clumsily administered.

Experience gained at Dieppe had given me self-confidence, and I felt certain that if I could succeed in obtaining the necessary training, I should be far more useful in France as an anæsthetist than as a nurse. But how to obtain the training? In England, as is well known (and contrary to the practice in foreign countries), it is illegal for any person, not holding a medical degree, to administer an anæsthetic. None the less, in large general hospitals, a senior nurse is not infrequently called upon to do so, especially at night and in emergency cases. Obviously an experienced nurse is better able to administer an anæsthetic than is, for example, an ordinary practitioner who, perhaps, in a country district, may find himself compelled by circumstances to administer one many years after his student days are over, and when, even during those days, he most probably had very little practice and no special training in what is a side-track of the medical profession.

On returning to England, notwithstanding the rather hopeless outlook, I decided to make use of my acquaintance with Sir Alfred Fripp, commenced at Guy's Hospital in the previous winter. I had worked there as a resident probationer and had been given the privilege of watching and sometimes of assisting the nurses serving under him, both in the surgical wards and in the theatre. He was a man unusually free from prejudice and red tape, and in spite of the unorthodoxy of the request, it was, I thought, just possible he might be willing to procure for me the necessary training. The event proved to be beyond my best hopes. Realizing the shortage of medical men in France, he approved the idea, and placed me at once with his principal anæsthetist, Dr. W. Page, M.D., for a course of theoretical and practical instruction.

I now accompanied Dr. Page from one hospital to another during the winter months of 1915-16. At first as an observer only, but little by little I was permitted to take part in the administration, and eventually to anæsthetize patients entirely myself. I also had the advantage of assisting two other professional anæsthetists at their respective hospitals.

Before leaving for a Croix Rouge Hospital in France in the early summer of 1916, I received unsolicited testimonials of proficiency, not only from Dr. W. Page, M.D., but also from Dr. Frederic Longhurst, M.D., anæsthetist to St. George's Hospital and to the Grosvenor Hospital, and from Mr. Howard Jones, M.B.B.S., anæsthetist to the Metropolitan Orthopædic and St. Mark's Hospitals, and I had other testimonials from several surgeons whose anæsthetics I had administered.

None the less, these parting words from Dr. W. Page were not encouraging: "You must not distress yourself too much if you lose a patient. In spite of the utmost care and attention it sometimes happens to *all of us*." Yet, as it turned out, and no doubt largely owing to good fortune, in the eleven hundred and thirty-seven anæsthesias it fell to my lot to induce during the war, I did not lose a single patient. Some died subsequently as a result of their wounds or from shock following on a severe operation, but none within several hours of recovering consciousness.

In this connection I have gone into some detail because, so far as I know, I was the only Englishwoman not "qualified" who was employed with method and regularity in giving anæsthetics during the war.

Early in 1918 it had been my great hope to take up an appointment as a British Red Cross anæsthetist, in a hospital at Wimereux, a position for which I had been recommended by no less a person than Dame Sarah Swift, O.B.E., Matron-in-Chief of the Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, herself a distinguished former matron of Guy's Hospital. At the last moment I received a letter from Sir Arthur Stanley, Chairman of the B.R.C. (supported by Sir Arthur Lawley and Sir Alfred Keogh of the War Office), cancelling the proposed appointment.

No doubt all three were actuated by conscientious scruples and by traditional peace-time orthodoxy. These inhibitions Sir Alfred Fripp's practical sense and Dame Sarah Swift's wider vision had discarded as being ill adapted to war conditions.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that but for the war it would never have occurred to me to impinge on the outskirts of medical privilege, nor of course did I accept any form of remuneration for what—owing to the intense and unflagging concentration required—proved sometimes to be an exacting and exhausting occupation.

On my return to England after the Armistice, the instruments and appliances I had accumulated were given to a hospital and my association with anæsthetics automatically ceased.

H. D'A.

MEDICAL TESTIMONIALS

COPY

53 WELBECK STREET, W.

March 31st, 1916.

During the last six months Lady D'Abernon has given a very considerable number of anæsthetics under my supervision.

She understands the signs of anæsthesia very well and has a good practical knowledge of the administration of anæsthetics and the different methods and apparatus ordinarily used.

Among the cases she has anæsthetized were a good many nose and throat cases, which cases perhaps require more attention and care on the part of the anæsthetist than any others. Incidentally they also enabled her to acquire knowledge and facility in the use of Junker's apparatus for the administration of chloroform.

I consider Lady D'Abernon to be thoroughly careful and conscientious in her work, and I am sure she would be of great assistance wherever there was a shortage of qualified medical anæsthetists.

H. M. PAGE, F.R.C.S., England.

(Anæsthetist to the King George's, Guy's and
West London Hospitals.)

COPY

43 CAMBRIDGE STREET, HYDE PARK, W.

Tel. : Padd. 4644.

I have much pleasure in stating that Lady D'Abernon has administered ether to a large number of patients at St. Mark's Hospital, City Road. She is well acquainted with the signs and symptoms occurring during the course of anæsthesia, and I have had great confidence in giving her entire control of the cases under my care.

In my opinion she is fully competent to undertake similar work in a military Hospital.

HOWARD JONES, M.B.B.S., London.

M.R.C.S., etc.

(Anæsthetist to the Metropolitan Orthopædic,
St. Mark's, and other hospitals.)

COPY

8 PORTMAN STREET, W.

March 30th, 1916.

Lady D'Abernon has given anæsthetics for me on my operating days at the West London Hospital for several months.

She has been very well taught, and is thoroughly acquainted with the various methods of anæsthesia now employed in Throat, Aural, and Nasal Surgery.

Personally, as an operator, I have always found her to be very careful, prompt, resourceful and self-possessed, and although many of the cases dealt with required operations on the larynx, trachea, brain and upper jaw, she has always given the anæsthetic extremely well.

I have every reliance in her ability.

HENRY J. BANKS-DAVIS, M.A., M.B.Cantab., F.R.C.S.

(Aurist and Larynzologist, West London Hospital.)

COPY

13TH REGION SERVICE DE SANTE
HÔPITAL 68, CHATEL-GUYON.

October 1st, 1916.

I certify that Lady D'Abernon has been for three months attached to the Surgical Section of Hospital 68 as anæsthetist *bénivole*.

Throughout this period she has administered all anæsthetics given in the hospital with coolness, assiduity and devotion. Her perfected methods and admirable technical knowledge procured us immunity from all anxiety and complete satisfaction.

I consider Lady D'Abernon an excellent anæsthetist and one to whom the most difficult cases may be confided.

D. N. KOEPPÉLIN.

(Médecin Chef and Chief Surgeon of
Hospital No. 68, Chatel-Guyon.)

(Actually transferred to Temporary Hospital
at the Carlton Hotel, Vichy.)

APPENDIX III

After I had left, and as the Austrian Army drew near to Venice, Cavaliere Stucchi, owner of a palace on the Grand Canal opposite to mine, was so good as to come across with a trustworthy workman and, after consulting my caretaker, he decided upon concealing my plate-chest and some other things of value by making a hole in the marble-floor of a bathroom and sinking the chest between the immense travi beneath it. In order that the floor should not appear to have been disturbed this entailed taking up and relaying the marble from wall to wall.

In England people are not unready to concede the lighter graces to Italians, but are inclined to doubt whether they possess any of the painstaking pedestrian virtues. Yet it should be noted that neither in England nor in France would an ordinary acquaintance have acted in the interests of a comparative stranger with equal energy and consideration.

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